

Horizon

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

•NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS
VI—ANDRÉ MALRAUX:

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by D. M. COLLAR

AN INTERVIEW WITH MALRAUX

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EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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DYLAN THOMAS

FERN HILL

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,
 The night above the dingle starry,
 Time let me hail and climb
 Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves
 Trail with daisies and barley
 Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
 In the sun that is young once only,
 Time let me play and be
 Golden in the mercy of his means,
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
 And the sabbath rang slowly
 In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay:
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air
 And playing, lovely and watery
 And fire green as grass.
 And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars
 Flying with the ricks, and the horses
 Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all
Shining, it was Adam and maiden,

The sky gathered again

And the sun grew round that very day.

So it must have been after the birth of the simple light
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm
Out of the whinnying green stable
On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,
In the sun born over and over,

I ran my heedless ways,

My wishes raced through the house-high hay
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden
Follow him out of grace,

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,

In the moon that is always rising,

Nor that riding to sleep

I should hear him fly with the high fields

And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.

Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,

Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

DYLAN THOMAS

A REFUSAL

TO MOURN THE DEATH, BY FIRE,
OF A CHILD IN LONDON

Never until the mankind making
Bird beast and flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness
Tells with silence the last light breaking
And the still hour
Is come of the sea tumbling in harness

And I must enter again the round
Zion of the water bead
And the synagogue of the ear of corn
Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound
Or sow my salt seed
In the least valley of sackcloth to mourn

The majesty and burning of the child's death.
I shall not murder
The mankind of her going with a grave truth
Nor blaspheme down the stations of the breath
With any further
Elegy of innocence and youth.

Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,
Robed in the long friends,
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,
Secret by the unmourning water
Of the riding Thames.
After the first death, there is no other.

GEORGE BARKER

THE WEEPERS IN THE SACRED TREE

Weeping they spoke out of the sacred tree:

‘Dark and unloving powers
Envying everything valuable that is ours
Determine human destiny.’

Smiling they stroked the bird on my shoulder:

‘Bright bait’, they cried, ‘Virtue!
Drawing destruction down upon the upholder.
The dove shall desert you.’

Sighing, they showed anguish in their breast.

‘Look! Look!’ they cried:
‘The pain is eternal but the cause has died.
Who cares what is best.’

Waiting for peace a victim at my foot

Turned to stone with patience.
The voices murmured: ‘Bitter the bitter fruit
Of our supplications.’

Then out of the tonguetwisting tree spoke to me

Every human and animal:
‘We ask our parental cause why we had to be.
Why do we live at all?’

‘Why does the bright-eyed algae fold the shore
Unloving in its embrace?’

O unrequited servants of Time and Place,
Serve, serve no more.’

‘Brute and hour, truth and knife,
Condemned to live and suffer and never die,
Pronounce the unholy Why,
Root out the assent at the source of all life.’

'Shuddering, the great star uncurls at its sex
 In labour, but cannot give
 Back in the teeth of the universal multiplex
 A stellar negative.'

'The snake with a rat stuck in its gullet,
 The homicide with a gun—
 O prolific dispenser of birth and of bullet,
 You, you are the guilty one.'

Subsiding, the weeping ceased in the sacred tree,
 As the leaves closed over.
 And I saw the everlastingly restless body of humanity
 Clasped in the arms of its lover.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON

SONNET

They were the saints and heroes of my early age ;
 And one deep in that cusped and coloured
 Restaurant, read me his words about the page
 Torn from the shut book : he was untainted

For me even by his errors, and full perfection,
 It seemed, in wide possession of his sky,
 Silvered them like virtues, past detection
 By my rebellious and imperfect eye.

I do not now reject them: incomplete,
 In this full-moon'd and quiet September night,
 Their wisdom warns me of the soft and white,
 The moron scratching, and the aimless feet.

I want perfection; but this cooler light
 Shows it no longer in its débris of defeat.

NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS-VI

ANDRÉ MALRAUX

D. M. COLLAR

THE IMPORTANCE OF MALRAUX

THE period that followed the French Revolution was cataclysmic. Brief flashes of consciously directed action—a war of liberation, an abortive revolution—gave hope to a few, but to most event and catastrophe were as little understood and as remote as were the pestilences of an earlier epoch. Inspired by slogans of personal loyalty, the mass of humanity were automata whose actions had for them personally little meaning or value. A gulf separates the victors of Valmy from the desperately heroic sappers of the Beresina. In contrast, our own age is above all an age of consciousness and choice. At no time have so many individuals been engaged in doing things they do not want to do and that no human being would ever freely choose. At no time have so many been so clearly aware of why they are making this sacrifice of immediate personal interest. Nor is this conscious choice confined to the more advanced countries. It is nothing to do with the propaganda of Press and Radio. The Chinese peasant is in it. Throughout Europe ordinary and undoctrinaire citizens have performed acts usually associated with the professional revolutionary. It is an historical fact that over an important fraction of the earth's surface man has forcibly won control of his productive resources and claims on that control to base his whole physical and psychical existence.

It is a tragic paradox that in this period whose keynote is consciousness and action, the intellectual is so frequently found in what is basically the spiritual position of the common man in the preceding age. Unable to understand the world he experiences, he renounces his participation for untempered grief, metaphysical consolation or the inner world of fantasy. Choice—although conditioned—was an assumption of Cartesian psychology. The psychology accepted by the intellectual today implicitly denies

the possibility of choice; if all reasons are rationalizations, if the dream not the act is the real, then the triumphs of humanity lose their lustre. Integration rather than leadership becomes the present aim. This situation is rendered ironical by the fact that to influence society was the passionate hope of the intellectual in the uncomprehending cataclysmic age. This is true not only of those who wrote with open sociological intent, but even of those who seemed most withdrawn and egocentric. The whole period following the French Revolution is strewn with heroic solitaires who attempted in isolation to escape from the passivity enforced by an inimical social order. The bravery of their experiment, action in isolation, compels us to admire, but in many cases the tension destroyed both the individual and the artist.

As early as the Napoleonic wars Hölderlin was obsessed by the position of the poet as an earnest of the return of human dignity and beauty to the world, and was driven to desperation by the fact that it had fallen to him, in the social squalor of Germany, to be that poet. Nietzsche, from voluntary isolation and mental solitude, hurled into an indifferent world a scathing indictment of mankind in general. In France Rimbaud, finding poetry incapable even of scratching the harsh crust of contemporary reality, left poetry for a field which he imagined—erroneously—would yield more easily to his efforts. Even Flaubert, arch-priest of the dispassionate, regretted that an understanding of *L'Education Sentimentale* has not prevented the Commune. The projected *Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues* was to have been no mere jeu d'esprit, but an offensive action against the age. It was the tragedy of the intellectual of the nineteenth century that his words found no more concrete response than an adolescent Byronism or specatorial disdain, that the man of culture was—Frédéric Moreau.

The intellectual as pure individualist, beyond and apart from society, scarcely appears before 1870. His emergence is of enormous value in the history of the human spirit. It is not only that the free and varied play of the senses is a by no means ineffectual reply to political and economic barbarism, but that the elaboration and refinement of individual experience has enlarged the whole conception of man. No return is possible, either to the quasi-political protest of the individual against the world or to a rationalism which ignores the newly discovered territories of thought and feeling. We must be grateful for the historical

conditions that have made this extension of individuality possible. At the same time it is now apparent that in one respect this attitude has had a sterilizing effect. Action has slipped out of literature. Even where action and violence are superficially present, the protagonists remain strangely static, somnabulic not dynamic figures. Yet this is a century in which almost everyone finds himself committed to an action which absorbs the greater part of his personal energies and may even involve the renunciation of sensation in individual death. Whether we like it or not, for the most important part of mankind theory and practice are today a unity. Man is no longer a passive mirror of events, but an organism with a desire to think and act as well as to feel and dream, who assents to all dangers and hardships for the sake of his idea and his passion.

The spiritual implications of this fact of contemporary psychology are vast and complex. Yet how few writers and artists have the courage to face this essential of our age, and to interpret for us not only its horror but its magnificence! The earlier artist was an antenna, quickening to more vivid life and self-consciousness the society of which he felt himself a part. Because of Aeschylus Athenian democracy was richer. The Elizabethans were more equipped to deal with an age of rapid change because Shakespeare wrote. The refusal of the modern writer to do more than exteriorise sensation or dream leaves isolated the man of action, and speaks only to the off-duty self. Its result has been the disintegration of the novel, the genteel monotony of the serious drama, and today's wayward proliferation of poetry—all accomplished, all revealing personalities both sensitive and valuable, all in the aggregate, unimportant. It has led more than anything to the relegation of literature to be a polite recreation rather than a source of spiritual energy.

It is the importance of André Malraux that he is deeply aware of the significance of his age. It is not only that he has acted, has seen the Chinese revolution of 1927, has flown in a fighter over Teruel, and became a colonel in the F.F.I. It is that he has accepted consciously directed action as the vital experience of our time. Other writers have taken part in the present war and in other struggles. They differ from Malraux in their surprise and their regret. Malraux is never surprised. For him the Chinese revolution and Spain are predictable stages in human history,

not revolting exceptions in a world of happy normality. It is the same with participation. For him, as for the fighting man today, it has to be and regret is irrelevant, profane almost. Now, in the fifth year of war, we can sense the rightness, humanly, of this outlook. As things are now, neither unmixed horror nor nostalgia for the old security are adequate responses. Almost alone among writers Malraux has intuitively apprehended the unseen coherence of a world in upheaval. Almost alone he is aware of what has always been the task of really great writers: to suggest a response to the experienced world that is adequate and in the fullest sense in conformity with the highest conceptions of human dignity.

Malraux's material is twentieth-century man in his essential conflict: the conflict of the man in whom individualisation has reached its greatest—perhaps the greatest possible—acuity, but whose only effective means of expression is through community. And because Malraux's material is not only twentieth-century man, but man as he has always been, a sensitised cage of flesh and bone, lost in the interstellar spaces, he is able to turn a gaze of Pascalian penetration on individuality itself and on the eternal problems of action and existence.

The focus of Malraux's earlier novels, *Les Conquérants* and *La Voie Royale*, is the clash of the individual with a society at once horrible and absurd. The characters in both are driven by the stupidity of society into revolution or colonial intrigue only to be confronted in their passionate endeavour to be their own absolute with that ultimate stupidity of the universe, their own death. Both are catalogues of heroic failure in a conflict whose outcome is decided beforehand. In this they have an interesting affinity with the French tragedy of the sixteenth century, another age of upheaval and acutely felt individuality, and with the Shakespeare of Richard II. *Les Conquérants* traces within the framework of the Chinese Revolution the decomposition, physical and moral, of Garine, a Russian agitator. An insurrection succeeds, but he does not believe in its value. He believes only in himself, in a Garine who he knows is being relentlessly destroyed by the germs of malaria. He prefers death to the failure of the insurrection which to him is useless. The title is ironic. The conquerors are disease and death. 'J'ai toujours cru qu'on lutterait contre la maladie,' says Garine, 'je sais maintenant,

la maladie, c'est soi-même.' The traitors are killed by the terrorists, the terrorists by the communists, and the invisible bacilli make short work of what is left. The drama lies in the tension between these forces of destruction. In *La Voie Royale* two men, united in their obsession with death, face unimaginable dangers only to find the nothingness of their endeavour, of death itself; '*Il n'y a pas de mort. Il n'y a que moi-même, qui vais mourir.*'

In both novels Malraux reveals some essential qualities. Already he is in revolt against the Flaubertian assumption that the dramatic moments of life are not also the significant ones. In a world of violence he is not afraid of melodrama. Already the accent of his characteristic lyricism is heard—a lyricism of image and idea, remote from any kind of poetic prose—and there is the distinct and passionate rendering of things seen: a wall covered with insects in a rotting Annamese forest as intensely experienced as a terrorist waiting to kill. And already there is Malraux's restless, remorseless intelligence, which makes the framework of these and of later novels so largely dialectical—two men turning their desires and their consciousness this way and that.

In content both novels are deeply pessimistic. The logical attitude of pessimism is inaction. If the blank wall of annihilation is the end alike of failure and success, then effort is irrelevant. According to popular wisdom, 'it will all be the same in a hundred years'. Yet the biological urge to act, the desire to assert individuality, above all the concern we cannot help feeling for a future we shall not survive to see (even although we know that the human race itself will be finished in a million years at the outside) gives the lie to this philosophy of passivity. All great pessimists have felt this contradiction. Some, like Schopenhauer, have been content to lead a muddled, mundane life for which they scorn justification. Others have disguised their nihilism beneath an arbitrary corpus of belief which being irrational is uncommunicable and unacceptable as a philosophy of action to the world at large. Both methods are theoretically feasible. Neither is an adequate interpretation of the dynamic of today, or of China in 1927. There Malraux was confronted not only with the type of stateless, homeless revolutionary, but with hundreds of non-professional volunteers of the revolution who had left homes and security to fight and die for something beyond and even alien to their personal interest. With his instinctive

grasp of the significantly human, it is this latter type that from now on becomes the centre of Malraux's work. Since the nineteenth century there has been little place in literature for the revolutionary as distinct from the demagogue. Yet the conscious revolutionary from choice, acting from theory, at once social catalyst and reagent, conditioned by and at the same time changing society, is psychologically one of the most interesting figures of modern times.

In order effectively to present the revolutionary, Malraux had necessarily to adopt the revolutionary's standpoint. Unlike most of the writers of his time, Malraux does not shrink from partisanship, has realized that: '*Ce n'est pas la passion qui détruit l'œuvre d'art, c'est la volonté de prouver*'. Passion is there, but it is in the form of intuitive apprehension of historical change, not of special pleading and self-justification. The revolutionary transformation of society is from now on implicitly accepted by Malraux as the characteristic pattern of human development. This central idea is a fact of history, a truth. That it is a provisional truth does not prevent it from having the human value of other provisional truths: Islam, Protestantism, Counter-reformation. Faced with a fact of this order, as inescapable as the facts of birth and death, there is no question for the writer of taking sides, to provide in the manner of the '*roman expérimental*' neat illustrations for social theoreticians. It is for him to facilitate psychological adjustment to this truth, to show its meaning for those who react worthily.

This deepened awareness is reflected in the greater imaginative scope of *La Condition Humaine* (1933), acknowledged in France as one of the outstanding novels of this century. The background is the same as that of *Les Conquérants*. Situation and treatment are almost completely inverted. For the successful insurrection there is disintegration, the collapse of the Wuhan government and the brutal repression by the Right Wing Kuomintang generals. All the central characters are doomed and know that the revolution of the workers and peasants is bound to fail. In themselves they represent all phases of knowledge of certain destruction. The terrorist Tchen, '*une éphémère qui secrète sa propre lumière, celle à laquelle elle va se détruire*', cares only to express his individuality by a voluntary and ironically useless act of self-immolation. Katow, naturally fearless, a

communist, little concerned for his personal life, gives away his cyanide death to a young Chinese awaiting torture, who, in a moment of tension perhaps unparalleled in literature, drops it. Kyo Gisors, the intellectual, has every reason to wish not to die, to abstain from revolution. He accepts death without bitterness as an unavoidable part of life, in sharp contrast to the frantic clutching of a Garine.

In *Les Conquérants* the insurrection had succeeded and only two had died. In *La Condition Humaine* death—not heroic death, but a mean death by torture—comes to almost all. The moral is clear. Revolutionary action results inevitably in the destruction of the individual, in a world whose only certain value is individuality. Why then do men act, why do they accept their death? In a passage worth quoting for its intrinsic loveliness, Malraux shows the alternative to action: the calm beauty of the opium dream in the mind of the father of Gisors; the final seduction of the death wish—

'Il entrait dans un monde où une bienveillante indifférence mêlait toutes choses—un monde plus vrai que l'autre parce que plus semblable à lui-même... Il se souvint d'une après-midi de septembre où le gris parfait du ciel rendait laiteuse l'eau d'un lac, dans les failles de vastes champs de nénuphars; depuis les cornes vermoulues d'un pavillon abandonné jusqu'à l'horizon magnifique et morne, ne lui parvenait plus qu'un monde pénétré d'une mélancolie solennelle. Sans agiter sa sonnette, un bonze s'était accoudé à la rampe du pavillon, abandonnant son sanctuaire à la poussière, au parfum des bois odorants qui brûlaient; les paysans qui recueillaient les graines de nénuphar passaient en barque; deux longs plis naquirent du gouvernail, allèrent se perdre dans l'eau grise avec une extrême nonchalance. Elles se perdaient maintenant en lui-même, ramassant dans leur éventail tout l'accablement du monde, mais un accablement sans amertume, amené par l'opium à une pureté suprême. Les yeux fermés, porté par de grandes ailes immobiles, Gisors contemplait sa solitude: une désolation qui rejoignait le divin en même temps que s'élargissait jusqu'à l'infini ce sillage de sérénité qui recouvrait doucement les profondeurs de la mort.'

Le Temps du Mépris (1934) is an experiment in pure individuality. '*Le monde d'une œuvre comme celle-ci, le monde de la tragédie... se réduit à deux personnages, le héros et son sens de la vie.*' Properly speaking there is only one character, the German communist Kassner, one place, an unlit prison cell, one time,

the undifferentiated space of ten days' solitary confinement. The events are few. Kassner is beaten. He is given a rope. A message is tapped and he hears the skull of his unknown comrade smashed against the wall. For the rest the drama is interior. It is the struggle for life and sanity against the temptation of death and the powers of madness and darkness: a sustained effort of assertion in complete isolation. The reconstruction of the thought-processes of Kassner is extraordinary, within its short compass perhaps the best imaginative recreation of the mind of a modern man. Each gradation is subtly recorded, conceptual thought, voluntarily evoked memories, compulsive image alternate in a mind that is sensitive and complicated, heir to the tradition of thought of a world it is pledged to overthrow. Here is no heroic but inarticulate proletarian—Malraux has created a mental equal. Yet beside acute intellectual awareness there are the deeper layers beneath intelligence, Kassner's superstitious fear that the life of his wife is somehow involved in his actions, the recurring dread of a vulture that seems to well up from the darkness of the cell. In one respect it is a work which has a special meaning for today. Kassner is haunted—as who is not—by a picture that is today a commonplace of the Press: the burned and mutilated bodies of two partisans on the plains of Siberia. What human values exist in the face of deliberate cruelty? Not until he is released, has escaped death in a blizzard over the Carpathians, does he accept cruelty, as Gisors had accepted death, in the fullness of his belief in man: '*Kassner s'était bien des fois demandé ce que valait la pensée en face de ces deux cadavres sibériens au sexe écrasé, des papillons autour du visage. Aucune parole humaine n'était aussi profonde que la cruauté, mais la fraternité virile la rejoignait jusqu'au plus profond du sang, jusqu'aux lieux interdits du cœur où sont accroupies la torture et la mort...*'

L'Espoir was published in the second year of the Spanish war, before the hope of the title became a hope betrayed. Such nearness and Malraux's passionate adherence to the Republican cause might have been expected to upset the balance, damage the work of art. Instead, *L'Espoir* surpasses by its greater complexity the tightness of organization that was the formal achievement of *Le Temps du Mépris*. It is a symphony of complicated individualities, the drama no longer of one but of a hundred individuals,

each with his own idea, passion, sense of life, whose action, thought and dream together weave the fabric of the civil war. There are heroes and cowards, men who act simply, whose thought is infinitely complicated, who have a theory, who have no theory, only an intuition, anarchists and communists, *pélicans* and International Brigaders, not types, but living men, each with his own mental and emotional life. And there is Spain in those first months: the hot days when the unarmed people battered down a garrison door with a tree-trunk; rain at Valencia, with children huddled under gigantic figures of *féerie moderne*—Felix and Mickey—while bombs drop in the suburbs; snow and the victorious sweep of Guadalajara. It is a novel of action, but the characters do not only act. They consider, question their action, lucidly, consciously, analysing the problems of war and revolution as they affect each one individually. Why do they act? What is the value of their action? The dynamiters look down on a sunlit cemetery and a woman dead on the steps of the Alcazar. Again and again the word '*dérisoire*' recurs with insistence.

Spread over Teruel under the wings of the international aviation were the walls of the peasants who had divided up the land. None of the aviators was a peasant, but each was prepared to die in order that those walls might stand. In this, for Malraux, lies the sufficient justification for action and violence, in this alone for him is '*l'espoir*', in fraternity, which is the consciousness of men of the unity of their destiny. This alone gives sense to life. In the face of absurdity the only attitude is acceptance, the only antidote, belief in man. Shattered by a fearful prison experience, a Spaniard wishes to escape to France. He is met by the unanswerable argument of another Republican: '*N'empêche pas que la seule chose qui soit aussi lourde que ton souvenir, c'est l'aide que nous pouvons apporter à ces types qui sont en train de passer sans rien dire.*'

This acceptance is at first sight simple enough. It corresponds to the practice of the vast majority of men in a changing economic or political situation. Yet it implies those very things from which the intellectual as custodian of human values habitually shrinks. It does not only imply war and death. It implies organization with all its stupidity and brutality, and the submission of the individual to authority, to party even. In the development of Manuel from an eager young communist to a leader taking the first salute of

the civil war, Malraux traces with considerable subtlety the essential tragedy of this transformation from apocalypse to organization. It implies also the acceptance of expediency, the realisation that '*Il y a des guerres justes, il n'y a pas d'armées justes. Il y a une politique de la justice, mais il n'y a pas de parti juste.*' How the intellectual, '*l'homme de la nuance, de la vérité en soi, de la complexité*', can miss the real greatness of a people is shown in the shadowy figure of the dying Unamuno, and in the professor who refuses to leave the threatened University City and fails to see in the civil war more than the fratricidal struggle of barbarians.

Malraux's reaction to the war in Europe cannot be known until the completion of *La Lutte avec l'Ange*, a vast chronicle of the century the first volume of which, *Les Noyers de l'Altenburg* has been published in Switzerland. Will Malraux speak with the authentic voice of the war generations? Whatever may be the content of this latest work, it is certain that five years of war have deepened the response to everything Malraux has written, have given his work a special value for our age. '*Le communisme restitue à l'individu sa fertilité*', Malraux wrote in the preface to *Le Temps du Mépris*. Today it is no longer the prerogative of communism to sanction effort and action. It is today, when so many writers are still immersed in private dreams, still caught in the web of personal sensations, that those whose deepest experience is co-operation can re-echo most profoundly Malraux's words of 1934: '*Il est difficile d'être un homme. Mais pas plus de le devenir en approfondissant sa communion qu'en cultivant sa différence—et la première nourrit avec autant de force au moins que la seconde ce par quoi l'homme est l'homme, ce par quoi il se dépasse, crée, invente ou se conçoit.*'

AN INTERVIEW WITH MALRAUX¹

*After a silence of four years, the author of *La Condition Humaine* talks to us of a new orientation of European culture.*

THERE is no Europe. There never has been. There has been a Christendom, and a vaguely European culture, alternatively Franco-English and Anglo-French, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These were vast domains, defined by their own particular life. What is meant by Europe today can only be defined negatively; Europe is that which is not Asia (for it is much more obvious to say that it is that which is not America). The concept is childish, conceived of a mass of odds and ends which include the pink printed continental maps of our childhood and William II's picture of the Yellow Peril. It should be noted, moreover, that Europe as an organic unity is a German hobby-horse: in the Kaiser's picture Germany came out well; it was Marshal von Waldersee, the commander of the European Army, who was fighting in China; and even if there is no powerful European reality striving for formulation, there is at least a permeability of mutual culture of the countries of Europe. The Europe of Hitlerite dreams was culturally much less a federation or a pseudo-familial grouping than a somewhat confused world in which Nazi ideas would have had an ascendancy similar to that of French thought over the Continent during the eighteenth century.

But French thought of previous centuries, English thought, and even that of Goethe, are *universal*, and, as such, are applicable to the universe; Hitlerian thought, on the contrary, is hierachic. It culminates in German values: it is subjected to them as a conquered Europe would have been politically subjected to Germany. There lay the essential contradiction. Putting all kinds of people in prison to give them back family spirit is not necessarily a bad system, provided that the gaoler does not expect to be considered as a grandfather.

I believe that a new culture is developing which we have felt stirring for some time (and which we should feel more strongly if we were less prejudiced against it): it is the Atlantic culture. There was a Mediterranean culture in Roman and even in Byzantine times, more identifiable than a European culture.

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There has been talk of a Pacific art—exaggerated but not entirely false. I do not believe at all in the ‘fatality’ of civilizations. The Napoleonic adventure undoubtedly hastened the rise of English power in Western Europe, and it seems as if the Hitlerian adventure may well be the most grimly effective means of hastening the rise of American power (and, of course, of Russian power as well). You know the English story of how, at the peace conference, Hitler appears before Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, who after consideration realize that he has increased or reinstated their power. At this point, Hitler, with a Chaplin gesture, tears off his moustache and forelock and, as he shows his true face says: ‘Colonel Lawrence, Gentlemen,’ bows and departs.

What importance will American influence have after the War?

I will not mention the other side of the question, the Eastern side. It is clear that the entire Slav world and Rumania will become part of the Russian world. I believe, however, that the metamorphosis of France will be directed towards the Atlantic—even in the case of a France in which Communism were to play an important part. Politics have considerable bearing on culture, but in unforeseen and irrational ways. What I mean is that France is nervous of an American ‘influence’, yet it is not a question of influence. Not only is influence mutual, as everyone knows (Greece on Rome, Persia on the Arabs), but above all a new culture is not the sum total of those which preceded it, but their metamorphosis. There is some subtle affinity between Eastern America, England, France, and Portugal (and to some extent, too, the democracies of Europe, even where they are racially partly Germanic: that is, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Scandinavia). The Atlantic element is quite different from the Anglo-Saxon element. Portugal is included, whereas Spain would be included less directly. South America is beginning to come into the picture. Those inclined to prognostication may say without being absurd that, in the same way that the principal event of the 1914 war was not Verdun but the Russian Revolution, the principal event of this war is the first symptom of American unity—the Rio conference.

What do you call culture?

It is not easy to improvise this kind of definition. Let us say: it is

the incarnation of a system of values; and more simply, harmony of sensibilities.

Do you not think that English feeling of today is nearer to French feeling than that of America?

Yes. The war has proved it in a startling manner. But what does England bring us in art? English art and London taxis are similar. Were it not for his puritanism, D. H. Lawrence could be a French novelist, and almost of the nineteenth century. Please understand that I am not speaking of *influence* but of convergence; I mean that what Hemingway, Caldwell, Steinbeck seek is closer to what the French writers of 1940 seek and sought even before they read them, than is the work of any English novelist. This obsession with 'fundamental' man is a hallmark of contemporary American writing and will doubtless be strengthened by the war—unless on the other hand the reaction is so violent that we may only find a literature of delicacy and imagination, but I think that we may expect to find both.

Is there not something primitive in the individual character of the American literature of which you speak?

It seems to be so, but I do not believe it. Many cultivated Americans consider their present literature decadent. In their eyes the great period of the United States is the nineteenth century: Poe, Thoreau, Melville, Hawthorne, Whitman. Hemingway 'incorporates' something primitive, but is not subjected to it. He is to American primitivism what perhaps Ramuz is to Swiss primitivism. There is something else: *to my mind, the essential characteristic of contemporary American writing is that it is the only literature whose creators are not intellectuals.* I neither approve nor disapprove, I merely state facts. I am convinced that the great problem of this literature is to intellectualize itself without losing its direct approach. The writers whom I met in the United States did not remind me of European writers, compared to whom they have neither the relative historical culture, nor the love of ideas (a prerogative of professors in the United States). They remind me of our painters; the same apparent indifference towards almost everything, except the table and the bottle; the same precise and confident knowledge of the technique of their fellow-writers past and present; the same appreciation of sound

judgement; the same picturesque clothing and even almost the same physique.

You can like or dislike the style of the American Army, but it is clear that it will be the style of the twentieth-century army. It is an army without discipline or full dress; an army of mechanics—incidentally victorious—whose men and officers say: 'We are not soldiers, we are mobilized civilians'. It is not only because America provides their uniforms that Allied armies are similar. She does not provide the English uniform, but battledress and American blouses are of the same family; in comparison, a Wehrmacht officer looks like an officer of the Empire.

During the time when she was most powerful, Germany had *no influence whatever* on the sensibility of the countries she occupied. Neither courage nor discipline are specifically German values; but the German silhouette, the German press, the German illustrated reviews, the German cinema, have made no impression anywhere. Western Europe was profoundly *bored* by all that. Tragic cinema is still universally influenced by the earliest Russian films; but who acknowledges the importance of the German cinema, even its finest achievements?

Everything that has been created or developed since the last war has been influenced by America: street planning; the façades of houses with enlarged windows; the car and, of course, above all, the cinema. It is undoubtedly the first time that a country has imposed its sentimental myths on the whole world—its underworld; its lovers; its thieves and murderers; and its comedian. Did we know before Chaplin that the whole world could laugh at the same man?

The influence of the United States is the less important side of the question. The connection between this developing civilization and the world is of prime importance. This war is obviously the first real world war. (India saved by the Chinese Army from Japan—that will doubtless have serious consequences). Not only does the cinema reach more or less everywhere, but since the period between the two wars *the art of the whole world has converged on us*. We have become heirs of the world as we are of 'our fathers', though not in the same manner. In this field the rôle of the United States is wide and superficial. The Metropolitan Museum of Art is without doubt the first museum where sculptors of the great periods of China, India and the West have

been shown to visitors on a basis of relative analogy. Where before has a Tang Bodhisatva been seen by the side of a Gothic Virgin?

The West also is now affected by the planetary heritage, but not quite in the same way. America is a civilization without deep roots; hence a rationalistic one. For her, the various arts are 'propositions'. For Europe, especially France—whose painting remains the best in the world—it is a question of integration; a flow of perpetual motion; of assistance in a new birth. Something of the kind already happened when, for the first time, painters could see a Raphael and a Rembrandt opposite one another. The result was not reconciliation or eclecticism, which would not have had much significance; it was romanticism. The unborn art will be as different from that which promoted its birth as Delacroix is from Rembrandt, Raphael and Rubens. And I believe that the Atlantic civilization will be in the same degree, in the same way, different from all its beginnings, even from the United States.

Does this point of view imply a definite orientation of French politics towards America?

Certainly not. These problems of civilization are presented in terms of destiny. Those of politics are quite different. Napoleon said that destiny was politics, but he saw that there was a margin. Greece would surely never have served Mediterranean civilization by further subjecting its spirit to that of Rome. Sassanid Persia played an enormous part in the development of Byzantine civilization, which she would never have played had she subjected herself to Byzantium. By stubbornly declaring himself a citizen of Geneva, Rousseau gained more influence over France than he would have done if he had proclaimed himself French. Hitler will have hastened more than anyone else the birth of the Atlantic civilization: and that was not exactly his object. Like those of God, the ways of destiny are devious. Our maximum efficacy can only be assured by our maximum will for liberty.

Has the war added anything to your reflections on Art?

I am not quite sure what point they had reached, as my 'Psychology of Art' was confiscated or burnt by the Gestapo, together with several other things. However, the war has made me discover this:

The decisive difference between the artist and the non-artist is not a sort of deafness to art on the part of the latter, but the fact that art is, in his eyes, a privileged, obvious means of sentimental expression. He is not indifferent to music, but for him music is the romantic ballad; he is not indifferent to painting, but for him it is the calendar, the post-card; he is not indifferent to writing, but for him it is the sentimental or dramatic novelette, concerned with love or fear. A truly totalitarian art would be an art in which the great artist felt the same sentiments as the masses, and that is why the only plastic 'totalitarian' art up to the present has been the religious art of the Middle Ages—Christian and Buddhist.

In the human field, as well, this war has taught me a number of things that neither Asia nor Spain were able to teach me. But I can hardly talk about them here.

They will be for the continuation of *La Lutte avec l'Ange* . . .

What will be France's rôle in literature?

You know that generally speaking, all prophecies lead to the ludicrous. Therefore . . . But I have been struck by this: the four French writers whose work is entirely subsequent to 1916, and who are the most widely read abroad: *Giono*, *Bernanos*, *Montherlant* and myself, are all four bound by what can be called the French heroic tradition, the Corneillian tradition. When, about 1930, I maintained that this tradition (in which, to my mind, Pascal is an essential link), was at least as constant and as deep as the other, I was accused of a paradox. But this tradition becomes more and more apparent, and I am not sure that French writing will not be valued above all for its Pascalian accent, which is not without echo in America.

There is, nevertheless, another current in French writing: Montaigne, Molière, La Bruyère, Chamfort, Stendhal, etc. . . . that of people who want to know what they are talking about, the regulators of dreams, the moralists, in fact. True moralists only exist in France and England. It is only the English and the French who have seriously judged women. The Russians, who have created fictional feminine figures which dominate their novels, have never written anything of importance about women. Stendhal wrote *La Chartreuse* and *De l'Amour*; Tolstoi created Anna Karenina and Natasha, but is only the great Tolstoi in his narration. I think, that we shall witness the reappearance of the moralist.

C

This twofold human effort, on the one hand to make man participate in the privileged part of his being—or in that which surpasses him within himself—and on the other hand to reduce to a minimum the part of comedy natural to the human state; this double effort is even, perhaps, in the ethical order, the sign of a new human type. Its attempts to develop may be felt with each convulsion of Europe. We have dreamt of a new humanism: Can we see the first signs there? The radio has given a happy destiny to my sentence in 1940: '*May victory rest with those who made war without liking it!*' A clear-headed and yet comradely insanity is perhaps the form of human greatness which is seeking to be born at this moment in the snow.

Front d'Alsace, le 5 janvier 1945

EDWARD SACKVILLE-WEST

LA LUTTE AVEC L'ANGE

André Malraux. *Editions du Haut Pays. Lousanne. 1943*

To possess only the first part of this most impressive novel is tantalizing and awkward: tantalizing because Malraux's MSS. are said to have been destroyed by the Germans, so that we cannot tell when we may get the sequel; awkward, because without the succeeding part (or parts) it is very difficult to foresee how the trend of thought is going to be worked out. For this is a philosophical novel, of an ambitious order; starting where *La Condition Humaine* left off (*L'Espoir* and *Le Temps du Mépris* may, for this purpose, be considered as interim works, and none too successful at that), *La Lutte avec l'Ange* continues the debate on the limits and respective value of Action and of Intellect. In this first volume we are given—to borrow a simile from music—the exposition and part of the development of a sonata first movement. We await the rest of the development, the recapitulation and (most important) the coda. Until this arrives one is reduced to a provisional judgement.

Volume one falls into five parts, in each of which an experiencing figure stands at a different remove from Action. (1) *Immediate Action*. The hero—'I'—among other French prisoners at Chartres, during the last days of the fall of France. As the battle recedes, the prologue ends with the significant

words: 'In this place writing is the only way of continuing to live.' (2) *Mediate Action*. The diplomatic intrigues, *à-la-Papen*, of 'my father' in Turkey, in the years preceding the 1914-18 war. His mission ended, he returns to his brothers' home, a forest-bound castle called the Altenburg, in Alsace. (3) *Inaction*. On the eve of war, a conference of eminent European *savants* takes place at the Altenburg. Subject of discussion: Man, changing yet eternal. (4) *Mediate Action*. On the Eastern front, in June 1915, 'my father' takes a spectator's part in the first experimental gas attack by the Germans against the Russians. (5) *Immediate Action*. 'I am in a tank which is attacking the Germans in the spring of 1940.

The author's evident aim, in constructing his novel from these oddly disparate elements, is to lead our eye as it were down a funnel on to the focus of his greatest disapprobation—the intellectual divorced from 'life', who sees the world and its problems through the distorting lens of books. These central scenes in the great Gothic library of the castle, with the rain hissing relentlessly among the immemorial chestnut trees outside, are written with a sardonic dignity and a loftiness of tone which few, if any, other novelists of today can even approach. The rather grim satire of these pages makes the most destructive fun of the Romain Rolland-Kayserling type of 'thinker', with his addiction to pretentious phraseology. '*Une idée n'y naissait jamais d'un fait, toujours d'une autre idée.*' It is all very brilliant, and very telling, while it lasts; but the dice are loaded: History and Science and Art are down the drain before we have time to grasp the enormity of the sacrifice we are being asked to make. The trouble is that, in order to drive home his point, Malraux is more or less obliged to blow up the subject from inside: only an intellect of the highest order could have delivered so formidable an attack on its own methods and conclusions, or have imagined the *mise en scène* with so Flaubertian a beauty and exactitude. That this attack comes from a noble source does not prevent it from being unfortunate, since it ranges Malraux willy-nilly alongside the zanies who wave their arms and shout '*A bas Flaubert! A bas Mallarmé!*' Malraux's own war-cry—*A bas la psychologie!*—may seem a little different, but the result of taking it seriously would land us—as Malraux sees, with apparent approval—in an oriental fatalism which could not but alter fundamentally the moral basis of our civilization. Perhaps this

might be a good thing, but it is hardly compatible with the strong neo-humanitarian bias which is Malraux's most striking quality as a thinker. 'Man is what he does' is, I take it, the central idea of this book. Its corollary: 'And if he *does* nothing he *is* nothing', is unavoidable. I find no difficulty in agreeing; but after reading *La Lutte avec l'Ange* and recalling its predecessors, I cannot avoid the suspicion that by action Malraux means violent (i.e. warlike or revolutionary) action. But this is the ancient, endemic illusion of the intellectual; try voicing it to a serving soldier and you will get a horse laugh. Violent action, he will tell you, is 'before, a joy propos'd; behind, a dream'. It is like the rainbow: you cannot be inside it and aware of it at the same time; and afterwards the memory is distasteful and nugatory. The only kind of action which really justifies both itself and the agent is that of creation, which is never violent, wasteful, or destructive of individual integrity.

It is in the third part of this volume—the narrative of the gas attack—that the author rises to his full stature as a master of descriptive prose. And what a stature! There is not a word too many, not one out of place; the cold, precise bitterness with which the destruction wrought, in plants, animals, and men, by the advancing cloud of corrosion, renders these pages as frightful, and as unrivalled in their art, as the etchings of Goya. The moral protest against inhumanity has never been more trenchantly made. Malraux's N.C.O. sums up the horror he has witnessed in a phrase that will have other echoes for the contemporaries of Buchenwald: '*Non. L'homme n'est pas fait pour être moié.*'

The implications of the second half of this volume run counter to those of the first; and we are left with the impression that, while war may destroy life, it is condemned to remain for ever outside it. This is a fitting conclusion for one whose passionate love for human beings far surpasses, in continuity and purity, any political system that could be devised to fulfil it. Nearly all novels of action (including those of Hemingway) are addressed to boys—or men with the mentality of boys. It is not the least of this novel's virtues that it is, in the fullest sense, an adult book. If Malraux is not the greatest of contemporary novelists—and I believe that palm should still go to François Mauriac—I can think of no modern novel more deeply original or more superbly executed, so far, than *La Lutte avec l'Ange*.

EDMUND WILSON

TWO SURVIVORS:

MALRAUX AND SILONE¹

DURING the decade before the war, when the tradition of Lenin was still alive and Marxism had still its prestige as a moral and intellectual force, there emerged in Europe two first-rate novelists who, though quite different in other ways, both presented the contemporary world in terms of the Marxist class conflict: the Frenchman, André Malraux, and the Italian, Ignazio Silone.

Malraux and Silone belong to the same European generation: there is only a year between them—Malraux having been born in Paris in 1900, and Silone in a little town of the Abruzzi in 1901. Malraux, who studied oriental languages and went to the East as an archæologist, became interested in the Chinese revolution, in which, in 1925–1927, he took an active part. He worked with the Communist Kuomintang, and was a member of the Committee of Twelve, which organized the Canton uprising. He wrote out of this experience his two novels, *The Conquerors* and *Man's Fate*, and the first of them brought him to the attention of Trotsky, whose acquaintance he made in the years when Trotsky was living in France and who tried to correct what he regarded as Malraux's out-of-date French romanticism and reconstruct him as an unambiguous Marxist. Later, in the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, Malraux took part on the Loyalist side as chief of an *escadrille*, and accepted the direction of Moscow in its strategy and policy in Spain. Otherwise, he has remained, however, quite independent both of Trotskyist and of Stalinist influence.

Silone, on the other hand, had been an active revolutionary worker from 1917, when, at the age of seventeen, he became secretary of the peasant movement, syndicalist in its political complexion, which had been launched in his native Abruzzi. Soon thereafter, he went to Rome, where he first became editor of a socialist paper, and then one of the founders, under the inspiration of Moscow, of the Communist Youth International, and where he took part, in 1921, in organizing the Italian Communist Party. In the years between 1925 and 1929, he was a member of the

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Central Committee of the Party, doing underground work in Italy under the Mussolini régime and representing the Party in Moscow during a period when its leader was in jail and at such times as Silone did not happen to be in jail himself. When it became evident, at the end of the 'twenties, that the Russians in the Communist International were beginning to dictate policy from the point of view of Russian interests at the expense of the freedom of the Communists of the parties of other nations to determine their own lines of action, Silone resigned with a group which included about half the Italians; nor did he afterwards associate himself with the followers of either Bukharin or Trotsky, who had set up split-off Communist groups, feeling, as he says, that these groups had all the defects of the Stalinist parties without the power of Moscow behind them. He left Italy at the end of the 'twenties and went to live in Switzerland, where, for the first time he began to write novels, and where he remained until 1944, when, after the fall of the Fascists, he returned to Rome.

The temperaments of Malraux and Silone present in certain respects a very sharp contrast. Malraux, though he served in Spain in the army of international Communism, has had, especially in his earlier career, an element of the international adventurer: part explorer of the ancient oriental world, whose most exciting sensation it was to find there the twentieth-century class struggle, part Byronic egoist and actor, driven by obscure compulsion to assert his will for its own sake; whereas Silone, since he has broken with Moscow, has been assuming a personality which combines in a peculiar way the traditional severity of the Communist with the compassion for weakness of a parish priest. For Malraux, the conception of the class struggle gave him a vision of the drama of history, in which he could play a rôle, fierce, courageous, perhaps noble; for Silone, it drew clear moral issues which showed him how to direct his energies towards ends that would benefit his fellows. Malraux is largely preoccupied with the tactics of action; Silone with ethical problems. But at one time both accepted the Marxist assumptions as a guide to the contemporary world and worked for the Communist objectives, and this experience has supplied the subjects of the most important books of both.

Now for the sincere Marxist revolutionary who was able to think for himself and not afraid to follow his judgement, further belief in the Soviet Union as a power working for international

socialism—if it had not become impossible already—became definitely so in August 1939, with the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact.

There is an observation in Malraux's new novel which, though applied to something else, sounds as if it had been inspired by the illusions of foreign Communists and Communist sympathizers about the conditions of life in the Soviet Union: 'It is as impossible', he makes one of his characters say, 'to see a country which embodies a myth in which one believes as it is to see a woman with whom one is in love'. And the horror of the destruction of Europe and the degradation of human values, protracted through the five and a half years of the war, made the realization of the socialist hope seem more and more remote and doubtful. For writers like Malraux and Silone, their natural line of development was broken, but, confronted with the scene of wreckage—living in the debris of defeated France under the German domination, or isolated in Switzerland in an exile which must at moments have seemed likely to be permanent—they had to lay hold of the new situation and find some way of making something of it; and what they have made is of so much interest and still so relatively little known—their latest books have not been published in English, and Malraux's is even almost un procurable in French—that I believe it may be worth while to take space to give some detailed account of them.

Malraux's novel, *La Lutte avec l'Ange* ('The Struggle with the Angel')—evidently referring to the ordeal of Jacob in Genesis xxxii), which was published in Switzerland in 1943 in an edition of but fifteen hundred copies, is offered as the first section of a larger work—a work which could hardly have been finished, given the historical immediacy of the subject, before the war had come to an end, and which Malraux, since the expulsion of the Germans, on active duty as colonel of a regiment, could hardly have had a chance to finish. It is impossible, thus, to judge this instalment in any conclusive way, since it is concerned with presenting situations of which we are not yet able to see the upshot, and propounding far-reaching questions to which the answers have not yet been found. The book develops a double story of two generations of an Alsatian family: the career of the German father, a diplomat in the German service, who has seen something of World War I, and the mishaps of the half-French son, who fights

on the French side in World War II. This son is supposed to put together the whole rather complicated chronicle. Taken prisoner at the fall of France and sent to a concentration camp at Chartres, he goes back over his own experience and reflects on his father's exploits as he has learned of them through a set of notes which has come into his hands after the latter's death. The father, an active and clever man, has that love of half-quixotic, half-perverse adventure which is characteristic of Malraux's heroes. Malraux brilliantly analyses his motives in a passage which explains his interest, passionate though apparently gratuitous, in the Young Turk movement of the beginning of the century: 'his need to get away from Europe, the solicitation of history, the fanatical desire to leave a scar on the earth, the fascination of a project which he had contributed not a little to shape, the fellowship of combat, and friendship'. In Turkey, this accomplished Alsatian comes under the influence for a time of the Pan-Turanian propaganda, which talked about uniting in a great Turkish empire all those peoples who were supposed to be of Turkish stock; but as he travels in Afghanistan and finds only a 'people of sleepwalkers' quite unconscious of their Turanianism, the whole myth suddenly fades away. He goes back and gives up his mission and presently finds himself again working for the Germans, with whom he is always a little restive. Just before the first World War he is present at a cross-examination by the head of the Secret Service of a supposed Russian woman spy, when they bring in her little son to try to make her betray herself, and later, when the war has begun, he assists at a pioneering experiment with the use of poison gas. On this occasion, the German soldiers, finding the Russians asphyxiated and choking, yield to a primitive human instinct and, instead of taking the Russian position, try to rescue the dying men. The Alsatian, himself half intoxicated with gas, is soon irresistibly impelled to behave in the same manner: he picks up a gasping Russian and starts back toward the field hospital with him. In him, as in the soldiers, there is something which revolts before the methods of warfare that the German general staff is developing. But the scene now shifts back to his son, and, following immediately the gas attack, we get an episode out of World War II—a tank advance in which the young man had taken part before he was captured by the Germans. His tank is proceeding at night through a heavy barrage of shellfire and falls into a trench, where

it seems to be helpless. Modern warfare has gone on getting worse: more crushing and more abasing. Nothing has been done to curb it, and the human race itself seems to have fallen, like the men in the tank, to the bottom of a dark ditch, imprisoned and overwhelmed by a great mass of anti-human machinery. Nor does there appear, in the second of these episodes, as there did in the gas attack, any sign of a fraternal solidarity between the soldiers of the hostile armies.

Here the volume ends, but a larger vista of interest has been opened up for the reader than this bare outline of the action would indicate. The narrator has also a great uncle who is a sort of dilettante intellectual in a serious German way. He has been a correspondent of Nietzsche and sometimes entertains Freud. He holds at his home periodical conferences, to which he invites a varied company of savants, and at which set subjects are systematically discussed. The father of the narrator attends one of these conferences, at which a great German anthropologist is supposed to have something of importance to say. He has been working for fifteen years on a book which he has just decided not to publish. It turns out that this book had been an Hegelian affair which was to have led up to the proposition that the civilization of the Germans was the supreme end-product of history, and that the author has now ceased to believe this because he has ceased to believe that 'the human adventure' makes any sense at all. The more he came to examine the diverse kinds of society which the human race has produced, the more he was driven to question the continuity of human history and the consistency of human purpose. He tells the company about the peoples who were for centuries firmly convinced that their ruler was himself the moon, that his power waxed and waned with it, and that when the moon went into eclipse the king had to be strangled by his subjects; and those natives of the Melanesian islands who have never seen any connection between childbearing and sexual intercourse, refuting attempts to enlighten them by pointing out that it is by no means true that love-making is always followed by babies. Just as the narrator's father has lost the racial conception of Turanianism in the presence of the Afghan tribes, so the German anthropologist has been losing the sense of human meaning among the mutually exclusive delusions on which human civilizations have been based. And are we not still Western man, he asks, enveloped in some

such delusion, which we are no more capable of perceiving than goldfish are of understanding their aquarium, which to them must seem the whole of the world when it is really but a small glass box? And if this is true, what is our basic delusion? Nationalism, someone suggests. No: not merely nationalism—our all-pervading and inescapable false notion may well be our idea of history and the conception of Time itself that goes with it.

'Has the notion of man a meaning? In other words: under the beliefs, the myths, especially under the multiplicity of mental structures, is it possible to distinguish a permanent line or idea (Malraux uses the characteristically French and essentially intellectual word *donnée*) which retains its validity through history and on which the notion of man can be based?'

The question is never answered. These perplexities, one supposes, are the struggle with the angel—which left Jacob, it will be remembered, a prince who had 'power with God and with men'; and the whole discussion, though not very typical of the time at which it is made to take place, the early years of the century, when the nations seemed to be prospering under capitalism and few doubted the inevitability of progress, serves to bring to a clear formulation the kind of misgivings which have been pulling at our minds during these complacency-shaking recent years. Malraux has sidestepped completely all the obvious melodrama of the triumphs and the defeats of the fascist régimes, which American novelists, far from the battle, have been exploiting with so much fervour and cashing in on with so much success. Malraux's hero is half-French and half-German, and his theme is not the struggle with the Nazis, or even any longer the Marxist struggle of classes which gave the confrontation of forces in his earlier books, but the justification of man itself.

La Lutte avec l'Ange is not, from the point of view of architecture and writing, one of the most satisfactory of Malraux's books. It seems rather to show the marks of having been written against pressures and under difficulties and only by dint of determined application. Both the style and the mode of presentation give sometimes through over-writing or congestion a certain effect of effort. Malraux's admiration for English literature has apparently here been responsible for some results that seem queer in French. Malraux has been praised by Gide, who has recently been deplored the

'feminine' tone of French fiction, for writing books which, by their masculinity, come closer to *Tom Jones* and *Moby Dick*; and he is said, in these last years of the war, to have become a strong anglophile. Certainly, in *La Lutte avec l'Ange* he has managed to reproduce—though usually with bad effect—some of the most flagrantly non-French traits of his favourite English authors: Kipling's knowing international allusiveness, Meredith's elliptical expression, and Conrad's mixed-up way of telling a story. Malraux—who, at one point, is said to have escaped getting shot by the Germans by impersonating an English officer—thus almost appears, in a literary way, as one of those 'displaced persons' whom a department of the Allied Commission is now making efforts to repatriate.

But any effort to get outside the formulas which, in preserving the French classical elegance, have tended to keep French literature provincial, is probably an excellent thing; and one finds in *La Lutte avec l'Ange* passages of sinewy and searching thought, strokes of dramatic imagination, of which only a man of genius would have been capable. Above all, there is a seriousness, an undulled perspicuity, about the large problems of human destiny, which has become the rarest thing in the world. This novel is both the most impressive and the most exciting piece of literature that I have yet seen inspired by the war.

The typical heroes of the novels of both Malraux and Silone have been workers for Marxist revolution; but the two writers have strikingly differed in their attitudes towards what the Communists used to call 'the masses'. Certainly, Malraux himself did not reach the revolution primarily through sympathy for the under dog, but rather, like his protagonist in *The Conjurors*, through disgust with the bourgeoisie—to which, in the author's case, must be added the motivation of a very strong sense of what non-Communists call 'human decency'. All the main characters in Malraux's novels are more or less extraordinary or exceptional men, and the Communist's self-identification with the hardships and interests of the working class has been the aspect of the social struggle which was least adequately rendered in his novels. Now, however, in *La Lutte avec l'Ange*, he has taken some special pains to try to make the common man sympathetic; yet these scenes are not his most successful. The conversations between the soldiers just before the gas attack seem a little gotten-up and laboured, the

reflections to which they give rise on the narrator's part a little self-conscious and sententious; the whole thing has a suggestion at moments of a pastiche of the Barbusse of *Under Fire*. The gas attack in which the German soldiers show their human solidarity with the Russians is not so effectively done as the tank battle in which the man of intellect loses control of his monstrous machine. Silone, on the other hand, has tended to be mainly preoccupied in his fiction with the relation of the dedicated revolutionist to the people whom he is supposed to be serving. When the Communist line loses touch with the people, he comes to the conclusion that there is something wrong, and though his protagonist, Pietro Spina, in his well-known novel *Bread and Wine*, never wearies of renewing his efforts to make connections between the peasantry and the Communist Party, his failures bring him constantly closer to the point of view of the peasants at the expense of the Marxist doctrine. Spina, impatient of the exile into which he has been driven by the fascists, returns in disguise to his native Abruzzi mountains in an attempt to rouse the people against fascism and to build a revolutionary movement; but he finds himself baffled at every move by the primitive mentality of the Italians, who see the world in terms of sins and pardons, saints and miracles, prayers and rites. In spite of himself, he makes his contact with them, not through his appeal to their class-consciousness, but through his natural sympathy for them, the sobriety of his life in their midst, a moral rectitude and a spiritual candour which they recognize and to which they respond.

And just as the false priest of *Bread and Wine* is, in the course of his relations with these peasants, half-transformed into a real priest, to whom they look for forgiveness and guidance, whom they believe to possess powers of healing, while he, on his side, is preaching to them as a militant disciple of Christ; so Silone himself has come closer to the conceptions of primitive Christianity and has been attempting to make a kind of merger between the ideals of modern socialism and these. 'In the modern drama,' he writes in the foreword to his new book, 'a new element appears in the guise of a protagonist: the proletarian. Not new in the sense of not already having existed in antiquity, but because his ordeal and his destiny were not then considered suitable subjects for history, thought and art. If to us moderns the situation of this character seems the nearest to the human truth, it is because, in the last analysis, between the ancients and us there has been Jesus.' This new

book, first published in Switzerland in 1943 and now just brought out in Rome as the first of Silone's works to be published in his native country, is a long play called *Ed Egli si Nascose*—‘And He Did Hide Himself’, a quotation from John xii (it is interesting that both Silone and Malraux should have fallen back on the Bible for titles), in which it is recorded that Jesus withdrew and disappears after preaching, ‘Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.’ *Ed Egli si Nascose* develops on a larger scale and with a different implication one of the incidents in *Bread and Wine*. In that novel there was a young man from the country who had gone to study in Rome and who, falling in love with an anti-fascist girl, had associated himself with a revolutionary group; but his small supply of funds had given out and, in order to finish his courses, he had agreed to take money from the fascist police to inform against the activities of his companions. But he has been horribly tormented by conscience and, when he is caught in the country by the local police, he allows them to kill him on the spot on the assumption that he is a genuine revolutionary. His death is thus an expiation and, in the account of it and the scene of his funeral, there are echoes of the Last Supper, the Passion, and the Crucifixion. Now, in *Ed Egli si Nascose*, Silone has made this episode his central theme. The young man is here driven to redeem himself by the much more positive gesture of actually printing and distributing a proletarian manifesto, and his murder at the hands of the fascist police proves the stimulus—where Spina has failed—that rouses the people against the regime and leads them to organize a united opposition. His death brings the play to a climax with a kind of liturgical drama, which has its Joseph and Mary, its Magdalen, its John the Baptist and its Communion, all worked out in a systematic parallel. Silone has explained in his foreword his belief that ‘the revolution of our epoch, which has been promoted by politicians and economists,’ presents ‘the appearance of a “sacred mystery” in which the very fate of man is at stake.’ ‘In the sacred history of man on earth, we are as yet, alas, only at Good Friday. The men who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” are still being derided and persecuted and put to death. The spirit is still forced to hide in order to save itself.’

In *Bread and Wine* Silone had already had Pietro Spina ask the same question as Malraux's anthropologist: 'What is man? What is this human life?' 'Every revolution' he tells young Murica, the informer who is to expiate his treason, 'always turns on this elementary question.' And, 'in this horrible society,' where man is 'mutilated, disgraced, deformed, insulted,' the problem is to become 'a new man'—or rather, to become for the first time 'a man in the true sense of the word.' Silone's way of finding a continuity in the vicissitudes of human history is to conceive it as a vast enactment of a drama to which the life of Jesus has given the symbolic clue.

Ed Egli si Nascone, as a work of art, is less successful than *Bread and Wine*. The novel, in its chronicle of the adventures of Spina and its procession of Italian characters, has something in common with the great panorama novels like *Dead Souls* and *Huckleberry Finn*; and Silone has not shown in this play a dramatic sense comparable to his narrative one. The emergence furthermore, of the mystery play from the milieu of the modern Abruzzi may be found distasteful by readers who are remote from the Catholic religion; certainly it will be found dismaying by the old secularist type of socialist. But the piece is full of excellent things; particularly the post-mortem discussions of the psychology of Communist activity in the period before the war. 'The underground character of the movement', the young renegade is made to explain, 'offers to the weak man the important and deceptive advantage of secrecy. He lives in sacrilege and shudders at it, but this is all concealed from the world. He is outside the hateful and terrifying law, but the guardians of the law do not know it. His denial of the established order remains an intimate and secret thing, as if it took place in a dream, and precisely on that account is likely to run to ideas that are drastic, catastrophic and bloody; but his external behaviour remains unchanged. In his habitual relations this kind of weak man remains as timid, silly and nervous as before. He conspires against the government in the same way that he may be in the habit of dreaming that he is strangling his own father, with whom he will sit down to breakfast in the morning.' And there is an equally merciless passage on revolutionary activity as a drug. The Communist's life is so dangerous and hard, one of the underground workers explains, that the only way to accomplish

anything is to eliminate the strain on your nerves, and to do this is to induce a narcosis. 'But,' one of the women characters objects, 'excuse me if I ask a stupid question. How can we be true and brave fighters for the revolution and be drugged at the same time? Shall we turn into a movement of sleep-walkers? . . . If we come to the revolutionary cause precisely through our sensibility?—because our sensibility has been wounded by the savagery, the injustice, the brutality, which we have found in present-day society? If we neutralize our sensibility, aren't we destroying in ourselves the very feelings that have brought us to the revolution?' The narcotized revolutionist may become unscrupulous and cruel and lose sight of the ends that he set out to serve, and the weak man who loves concealment may find it easy, under pressure of terrorism, to betray the underground movement and to keep his betrayal concealed. When young Murica has turned stool pigeon for the fascists, he finds himself tortured by the notion that, if no one ever finds him out, he will never be punished for his treason, and it is a horror of this idea that good and bad may be mere matters of practical expediency which drives him, in moral protest, to do something that will get him into trouble. For Silone has grasped boldly here the central problem of the present time: the justification of a human morality at this moment when the religions are losing their authority and man finds himself alone on the earth. The situation of the German Nazis was precisely that of young Murica: why worry about moral principles if you are never to be called to account?—and, unlike Silone's young student, they could not see that they did have to worry.

Silone himself, in the face of this problem, has reverted to the Christian religion in a special non-ecclesiastical version—a version which one may find it easier to sympathize with than the formal and official version of some of the recent Protestant converts to Catholicism. His point of view is a curious one. He makes one of his characters speak of 'the new idea of good and evil' of 'those who do not believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus but do believe in his agony;' and he has explained to the present writer that he does not accept what he calls 'the mythology of Christianity,' that the liturgical form of his play and the analogies with the Gospels in his novels have come to him quite naturally as a 'result of his never having known in his childhood

any literature except the Bible and never till he was seventeen having seen any drama except that of the mass. Yet certainly the life of Jesus has still for him a mystical meaning; and, in a paper read recently in Rome before the Associazione per il Progresso degli Studi Morali e Religiosi—I quote from the newspaper account—he dissociated his present position from that of the 'God-seekers' of the Russian socialist movement after its defeat in 1905, but asserted that he belonged rather among 'those of whom St. Bernard speaks, those whom God pursues, and whom, when He overtakes them, He tears to pieces and chews and swallows'. All this does not, however, prevent him from taking a very active part in the work of the Socialist Party as a member of its central committee.

The great importance of these two men at this time is my excuse for thus reporting on them at length. They stand almost alone in Europe as writers of first-rate talents who have continued to take imaginative literature with the utmost seriousness and who have not lost their hold on the large social developments that lie behind national conflicts. They have survived the intellectual starvation, the spiritual panic of the war, and they are among the most valuable forces still alive on their devastated continent. Still they are trying to perform through their writing what Malraux makes one of his characters describe as the function of art: 'a rectification of the world... It seems to me that the cardinal confusion has arisen from our having assumed—in our conception of Greek tragedy it's striking—that to represent a doom is to suffer it. But that's not true: rather, it's almost to possess it. The very power of being able to represent it, to conceive it, makes it possible for it to escape from its real fate, from the implacable divine scheme; brings it down to the human scale. In what is essential, our art is a humanization of the world.' This is a much humbler point of view than that of the defiant Romantics or of the professional nineteenth-century Titans; but it trusts in human strength and vindicates human pride as the writers of our day have not always done. 'The greatest mystery', says Malraux in another fine passage of his novel, 'is not that we should have been thrown up by chance between the profusion of matter and the profusion of the stars; but that, in that prison, we should be able to get out of ourselves images sufficiently powerful to deny our insignificance.'

HARRIET and SIDNEY JANIS

MARCEL DUCHAMP

ANTI-ARTIST¹

COUNTER-ART-WISE Duchamp, arch rebel of twentieth-century art, stopped painting more than twenty years ago. Nevertheless, new works continue to come into being, appearing sometimes mysteriously, sometimes miraculously, out of the depths of the serenity that surrounds and the quiet that informs his life and his person. These works are scarcely recognizable as the products of creative activity: they are so unorthodox and so far removed from patterns, centuries-old, of the material and conceptual substance of painting and sculpture. A cataloguing of this fascinating miscellany of the last quarter century would include rotoreliefs, cover designs, montages, objects, near-objects, cinema, ready-mades, collapsible sculpture for travelling, and mobiles.

Perhaps more than any other living artist in this revolutionary period, Duchamp has departed from all existing norms. As an example, since his arrival in America in 1941, he installed the surrealist exhibit for the Co-ordinating Council of French Relief Societies, Inc. Spinning in front of the pictures a veritable maze of cobwebs made from three miles of string, he symbolized literally the difficulties to be circumvented by the uninitiate in order to see, to perceive and understand, the exhibits. He has also been engaged in completing his imaginatively conceived *Boîtes* which contain facsimile reproductions of his life work, in half-tone, in colour and in miniature objects. The *Boîte* is a device which, when manipulated, retrospectively unfolds the work of Duchamp before the spectator in such a way that the presentation constitutes virtually a composite portrait of the artist's personality set forth in aesthetic terms.

Despite the prevailing idea that Duchamp has abandoned art, the high spiritual plane on which all of his activity is conducted converts every product, whether a personally selected 'ready-made' or his dada installation of a surrealist exhibit, into a work of

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art. It is such cumulative evidence that attests to a continuing creativity on the part of Duchamp from the time of his earliest paintings done in 1910-11 under the impact of Cézanne to the varied works executed today.

Always an active dadaist, Duchamp's attitudes were articulated, however, in the years preceding dada, and although acclaimed by the surrealists, he retains these proto-dada attitudes in their nascent state. Whether or not dada had been formulated into an organized programme, Duchamp would undoubtedly have gone his way just as he has done. Anti-artisan and anti-artist, he is anarchic in the true sense, in revolt even against himself. He says, 'I have forced myself to contradict myself in order to avoid conforming to my own taste.' Like the German, Kurt Schwitters, he may be regarded as a natural dada personality.

Out of this native dada spirit emerges the invention of a series of new techniques so original and varied, at once so imbued with the spirit of play and of earnestness, of freedom, spontaneity and yet of reflectiveness, so marked with the character of the individual and with that of the period, that they constitute not only an absorbing chronicle of the creative life of a highly sensitive, intelligent and civilized person, but, as well, an imposing contribution to modern aesthetics.

These techniques are bound up with Duchamp's philosophic concepts. They spring from the core of his ideology. They are the means to a modern imagery, to a contemporary mythology, to miracle-provoking mechanomorphic fetishes. They are achieved in as detached and impersonal a manner, as unsentimental, unromantic and unemotional a manner as it is possible for a highly speculative and disciplined individual to employ. This asceticism on the part of Duchamp is akin to that of Mondrian, and here a comparison with a similar tendency in another artist merely serves to point up the difference in accomplishment to be found in different personalities. Mondrian's severity carried him to a finality of logic envisioned within the premise of the original canvas rectangle, of primary colour, and of paint and brush. To Duchamp, the brush, the canvas and the artist's dexterity of hand are anathema. He thinks and works in terms of mechanics, natural forces, the ravages of time, the multiplex accidents of chance. He marshals these forces, so apparently inimical to art, and employs them consciously to produce forms and develop

objects, and the results themselves he regards as secondary to the means used in making them. Under such circumstances, his works literally demand consideration in terms of the techniques employed, for these techniques carry the burden, in a new and significant way, of the structure of intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual content in the objects which he has made. So organic, and so intimate is the connection between concept and technique in Duchamp's entire work, that it becomes necessary to discuss one in order to show through its reciprocal action upon the other, their joint reason for being.

Duchamp's work falls into categories of threes, intentionally or otherwise: movement, machine concept, and irony. Irony subdivides into three groups: selection, chance and the ravages of time. Chance configurations are designated by Marcel as obtainable by employing the following three methods: wind, gravity and the device termed *adresse*.

Concept of movement and resulting techniques

The idea of movement intrigued Duchamp almost from the time of his first painting. It remains a recurring theme which appears constantly in varying ramifications. In 1911 he painted *Portrait*, a monochrome picture with five versions of the figure spreading from a common base across the top of the canvas. This is still partly the idea of simultaneity deriving from cubism, but goes further in that it suggests movement of the figure itself as well as movement of the spectator around the figure as in cubism. The *Coffee-grinder*, 1911, charts movement by showing the position of the handle at various intervals within the arc it describes while in motion. *Nude descending a staircase*, 1912, is a progression, giving the kinetic continuity—virtually futurist—of the figure as it moves through a designated area of space. Duchamp terms this 'giving a blueprint of movement'. In *King and Queen traversed by swift nudes*, 1912, Duchamp opposes figures in motion and static figures; *Passage of the virgin to the bride*, 1912, fuses the concrete idea of the figure in motion with the abstract idea of its transition from one state of being to another. In his chef-d'œuvre, the large glass titled *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires même*, 1915–1923, the concept of this picture, to speak in most general terms, deals with cause and effect—the changes in matter resulting from the play of forces upon it. Whatever movement is implied in these

changes is not given kinetically, as in other pictures mentioned, but is effected pictorially alone, by virtue of plastic rhythms. These pictorial rhythms interact between the various mechanical forms which are presented as being stationary rather than in motion.

An early mobile, 1916, a bicycle wheel mounted on a kitchen stool, tacitly invited the observer to spin it. Here is the object itself, one that incorporates actual motion, as contrasted with previous painted representations of motion. *Rotary glass plaques*, 1920, is the next step. Now the construction is entirely fabricated by Duchamp and is spun this time by a motor. This is an ingenious device consisting of a series of rectangular opaque glass plaques of graduating sizes, spaced a metre deep on an axis and decorated with black and white lines. In motion these lines create an illusion of circles on a flat surface. Thus the object when spun seems reduced to two dimensions.

A further step is *Rotary demisphere*, 1925. Here a series of eccentric circles is painted upon a hemisphere. When set in motion by the attached motor, these circles form optical spirals, alternating away from and then toward the observer.

Rotary demisphere in turn served as the model, the principal actor, for the film, *Anaemic Cinema*, 1926. There is a further application of this idea in a series of optical discs titled *Rotorelief*s, 1935, which might be called phonograph records for the eye. The discs, placed upon the revolving turntable of a phonograph, exploit through optical illusion many variations of movement in three-dimensional space.

The techniques used throughout the continuity on movement are, first, the conventional paint and brush unconventionally employed, then many original and brilliantly conceived techniques developed for the large glass. These will be discussed later. Subsequently, constructions to be manipulated by hand, motor-driven constructions, as well as cinema, established movement, completing the change from semi-abstract representations of naturalistic movement (*Nude descending a staircase*) to actual physical motion, including optically created presentations of abstract movement (*Rotaries* and *Rotorelief*s).

Machine Concept and Techniques of Application

In 1911, Duchamp's brother, the sculptor, Duchamp-Villon,

asked each of a group of artists to make a picture for his kitchen. Among the artists were Léger, Metzinger, La Fresnaye, Gleizes and Duchamp himself. Marcel's contribution was the *Coffee-grinder*, which he made casually and pleasurabley, responding to the mood of the circumstances under which it was requested. However, it was destined to be more than a perfunctory kitchen decoration, for while working on it, his interest shifted from the outward aspect of the object to its mechanics, to the manner in which it worked and moved as a machine.

This incident served to release the inventive and fecund personality of Duchamp as it exists today, as if inadvertently he had exposed to light and air, to the necessary elements, a nucleus from which his own psyche could develop and grow. Duchamp regards the *Coffee-grinder* as the key picture to his complete work. Looking back through the structure of his achievement, the elements, constantly in one mutation or another, in one degree of complexity or another, are all present in simple form in the *Coffee-grinder*: movement, already referred to; the magic of mechanics; and the inimitable flair for pointed irony.

From the time of the *Coffee-grinder*, physical, poetic, aesthetic or ironic references to the machine are part of Duchamp's created world; the kinetics of the machine, its dynamics, energy and rhythms, machine-made products, machine forms, and the machine itself formulate its physics, fill its space. In this world, the human mechanism operates like a machine and resembles the machine, natural forces are synchronized with man-made power. Duchamp animates the machine, mechanizes the soul. Between these counter effects, motion becomes pure operation without objective or consciousness.

Fascination with the mechanics of the *Coffee-grinder* became diverted to those of the human form, in paintings, and especially in the drawings, sketches and paintings made as preliminaries to the large glass. *Passage of the virgin to the bride* is as complex in its mechanical aspect as in its movement, for changes in the form of the inner mechanism of the bride follow changes in her state of being. *The Bride*, 1912, is perhaps the most poetic version on canvas of a work in the mechanomorphic concept.

By 1913, Marcel is rejecting as well as accepting this interest in the internal structure and workings of the human mechanism, for simultaneously with these constructions, he drew a pattern,

another 'blueprint' called the *Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries*. This is a plan for the group of malic¹ forms or bachelors used in the large glass, and conceived, as it were, as empty hoods—'hoods without motors beneath'. The large glass visualizes both the inner and external character of objects and persons. The inner is that of the bride's structure, highly mechanized and abstract, which has been transformed, as we have seen, through the series of changes in the various preliminary sketches and paintings made for it. The bride has been further transformed by the malic forms in the glass itself. These are depicted in their outer aspects as moulds, or uniforms, symbolic of their occupations identified by Duchamp as those of priest, delivery boy, cavalry man, cop, undertaker, servant in livery, bus-boy, station master, gendarme.

They are responsible for setting in motion the series of causes and effects transmitted by the Duchamp-invented machinery and experimental apparatus: the glider, the chocolate grinder, the large scissors and the cones; also by visualized mechanical processes as in the three circles, or 'optical evidences' of change.

In 1914, a year before starting the large glass, Duchamp had arrived at a speculative point of view as a result of which he designated objects as ready-mades. Ready-mades are what the name implies, complete objects which are at hand, and which by reason of the artist's selectivity are considered by him as belonging in the realm of his own creative activity. The assumption is that the object, conveying properties which coincide with the artist's angle of approach, is endowed as a work of art by virtue of the insight and authority of the artist's selection. Selection is here no longer just a step in a process. It becomes a completed technique.

That these objects, which Duchamp signed, were most frequently machine-made, reflects the conditioning imposed by his interest in the machine aesthetic. Examples are the famous *Fountain*, 1917, rejected from the Independent Show in New York that year, the Underwood typewriter hood, 1917, a coat rack, an arm from a hat rack, later used for a shadow in the sensitively achieved mural titled *Tu m'*, 1918. Occasionally, as with the bottle rack, his first ready-made, he added an inscription, or as with the shovel suspended from the ceiling and entitled *In advance of the broken arm*, 1915, he gave a literary title to 'create another form, as if using another colour'. There is also the

¹Malic. Obtained from the juice of several fruits especially apple. *Editor, Horizon*

ready-made-aided, in which details are added to stimulate various responses. In the object subtitled *à bruit secret*, 1916, a device to express the idea of compression, two pieces of metal fastened by bolts compress a ball of twine. The ready-mades may be unique as a concept, but they are not necessarily intended to be unique as examples. For instance, the bottle rack was lost and replaced by another. Although the original inscription was forgotten and no other substituted, the act of replacing the object itself grants to the product of mass production the same validity as nature grants to any star in the skies or grain of sand upon the earth.

The ready-made is the forerunner of the surrealist *objet trouvé*, objects generally found in nature and singled out for possessing, through the workings of the elements of nature, fantasy, aesthetic configuration or paranoiac images.

Irony as concept and technique

'The distinguishing quality of irony is that the meaning intended is contrary to that seemingly expressed. Irony may be gentle or cutting.' —N. Webster.

'Irony is a playful way of accepting something. Mine is the irony of indifference. It is a "meta-irony".' —M. Duchamp.

Duchamp's credo for working is based on a highly evolved logic outside of the aesthetic considerations of 'good' or 'bad'. The aesthetic result is not only not an objective, it is intentionally disregarded. That a high aesthetic quality stamps all that he touches is the result, not of intention, but of Duchamp's high degree of sensibility. He identifies the means of working, the creative enterprise, with life itself, considers it to be as necessary to life as breathing, synonymous with the process of living.

There is implied here the attempt to animate art, to establish a vital and meaningful interpretation between life and art, to cause both to pulsate as one natural living process. Merging the impulse of procreation with that of artistic creation, there apparently accrues for Duchamp a sense of universal reality which interpenetrates the daily routine of living.

Just as a child often cancels out a picture he has made by running a brush across it, Duchamp negates the seriousness of his own inner motivation by running it through with scepticism. Possessing a revolutionary attitude of mind, Duchamp postulates his responsibility to himself and to society, but, under the influence

of his own philosophic detachment, disclaims such a responsibility. Here is the core of the inner drama, the conflict between acceptance and rejection that is the basis of Duchamp's philosophic and aesthetic rationale. He resolves it by accepting both sides as concomitant parts of reality. Total scepticism could have meant suicide, as it did subsequently for one or two of the early surrealist poets. Or it could have meant complete inactivity resulting from a constant state of bewilderment or a persisting mood of indifference. (It has long been the general impression that Duchamp fell into this condition because he does not paint on canvas or make sculpture that is readily classifiable as such.) Irony, the 'playful way of accepting something', has made it possible for Duchamp to attempt a synthesis. Instead of accepting the alternatives of annihilation or of living in a vacuum, he has worked out a system that has produced a new atmosphere in which irony functions like an activating element, causing a pendulum-like oscillation between acceptance and rejection, affirmation and negation, and rendering them both dynamic and productive.

The *Coffee-grinder* is Duchamp's earliest proto-dada work, his first gesture of turning against the practices as well as the symbols of the traditional artist. Here for the first time, he dissects the machine, and in exploring its parts, makes a new machine, showing in the process sardonic amusement with, and irreverence for, the power of the machine and the modern sanctities of efficiency and utility. Something of this general attitude is present in Rube Goldberg's humorous play on mechanization, where a complex and fantastic display of ingenuity is employed to obtain a disarmingly simple result; in Ed Wynn's delightfully preposterous and satirical invention, contrived on the principle of the typewriter, as an aid for eating corn on the cob; and in Charlie Chaplin's film *Modern Times*, especially where the efficiency of the system for feeding the worker seeks to destroy the last vestige of human will and to convert him into a robot or a cog in the machinery.

All of Marcel's human mechanism pictures are both playfully and seriously ironical in their implications, *Nude descending a staircase*, *The Bride*, and especially the large glass.

With Duchamp, irony transcends individual doubt and frustration to become a commentary on the universal predicament of man in his world. Knowingly or otherwise, the large glass

appertains in concept to the Christian tradition in painting. It is essentially an Assumption of the Virgin composition, with the lower part given over to the secular world and its motivation, the upper, to the realm of the inner mechanism and inner spirit. The basic plan serves, not for spiritual elevation in the religious sense, but for man's exaltation of woman—a satire on the deification of woman under the prevailing culture. Thus, though it follows the pictorial form of a religious picture, it is opposed to contemporary *mores* directly traceable to religious influences.

This picture is only one of a series of comments on contemporary culture which Duchamp has made. Another is the picture, quite disrespectfully titled in French *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919, a print of the Mona Lisa to which he added a moustache and beard as a boy marks up a poster in the subway. This act was evidently intended to register contempt for Renaissance culture, for the glorified sentimentality of the Mona Lisa, for the mere virtuosity of brush and of hand. A commentary on the level of popular taste exists in the ready-made-aided, *Pharmacie*, 1914, a vapid and fuzzy autumn scene, an existing chromo, adorned by Duchamp with red and green pharmaceutical vases, perhaps as 'stop' and 'go' signals for would-be art lovers.

Definitely incisive is the irony that exists in *Unhappy ready-made*, 1922-23. This object was constructed from a text-book—a treatise on geometry—opened face up, hanging in mid-air and rigged diagonally to the corners of the porch. It was left suspended there for a period of time, during which the wind could blow and tear its pages of geometric formulae, the rain drench them, and the sun bleach and fade them. Thus exposed to the weather, 'the treatise seriously got the facts of life'. ('What is the solution?' Duchamp proceeds to ask. 'There is no solution because there is no problem. Problem is the invention of man—it is nonsensical.') This ready-made epitomizes the conflict between human knowledge and the eternal verities.

Duchamp accepts as inevitable the action of the forces of nature, the changes which time effects, its proclivity for corroding, destroying, reducing to rubbish all that man builds, its haste in covering all human traces with dust.

At one time the large glass lay under a coat of dust which had accumulated over a period of six months. In this condition, it was dramatically photographed by Man Ray, and, the photograph

titled *Elevage de Poussière*, all but resembles the traces of a lost civilization spotted from an aeroplane. Duchamp dropped fixative on the glass where the dust covered the cones, using the mottled effect of discolouration, as a colour externally imposed. Preserving this as a memento of a condition prevailing at a given moment, he cleared away the remainder of the dust and began to work again. Here he submits to, but is not dominated by, the inevitable. Sometimes, as in *Unhappy ready-made*, he goes out to meet the situation, establishing the conditions under which the elements may act. The ravages of time he accepts with philosophic detachment, as in the ready-made consisting of the rusted metal comb, a contemporary object primitive enough in its form and aged enough in its incrustations to conjure up in advance the image of its appearance, if, in the remote future, it were to be dug out of ruins. As the shovel predicts 'the broken arm', the comb is offered as a sample of the state of archaeological findings to be unearthed hundreds of years hence.

The element of chance

Chance is a sub-category of irony in the work of Duchamp, its use springing from the ironic point of view and its application highly charged with mockery. The results of his experiments with chance are applied with the precision and detachment of mathematics. Selection enters before and after the fact. Anomalous as this may sound, Duchamp uses chance intentionally. Through its use he arrives at 'a new unit of measure', finding forms independent of the hand. A rich variety of techniques has developed from its use. Three basic means are employed—'wind, gravity, and aim'.

Duchamp supplies the following key to his first experiment with chance 'Draft is a force. If you capture it, you can make a piston move.' Air currents blowing a piece of mesh gauze against a screen, imprinted a limpid rectangle upon it. The experiment repeated three times gave three chance images, variations on the square, which were used in their precise configuration on the cloud formation in the large glass.

Choosing deliberately a thread a metre long, Duchamp held it 'straight and horizontal' at a height of a metre from the floor. This preparation was a kind of mathematical ritual. Then, chance and gravity were allowed to play their parts. The thread was dropped on to a horizontal plane where it was fixed in the

chance line that it formed. This experiment was repeated three times, giving three variations of the chance line which were used in several pictures. These lines, titled *3 stoppages étalon*, 1913–1914, arranged into three different groupings for a total of nine, were projected on the large glass in relation to the nine malic forms. The lines fanned out like huge cracks, anticipating the direction the actual cracks took when the glass was eventually broken by accident. Here again, perhaps, is Duchamp's acceptance of the intervention of nature, or at least of 'fate'. In using glass, he surely knew, even though he ignored the fact, that the chances were it would be broken. All the more reason, it is astounding that by the use of chance, he was to anticipate the configuration of the breakage when it occurred.

The third device in allowing shapes to create themselves and thus void the responsibility of the hand, is termed by Duchamp *adresse*, that is, skill in aiming. Nine marks were made upon the glass by the impact of shots of matches dipped in paint, from a toy cannon. ('If the instrument is bad, the skill is tested more.') Aiming nine shots at a given point, these formed a polygram as a result of variation in the aim-control and accompanying conditions. He then converted the flat polygram or floor plan into an elevation plan. Here the nine points became the locations for the nine malic forms in perspective.

The laws of chance were later exploited in dadaism by Arp and, in surrealism, Ernst's decalcomania of chance has been the means for releasing the springs of inspiration for many of the younger surrealist painters.

The various techniques already mentioned in connection with Duchamp's work are only a part of those implicit therein. There might also be mentioned as of particular interest, the 'optical evidences' in the large glass, actual optical drawings for the correction of eyesight, transcribed in perspective and scraped out of quicksilver that had been applied, mirror-fashion, to the glass. There is also the use of lead wire and string to supplant the hand in drawing lines. The device of kinaesthetic surprise is employed in the object sardonically titled *Why not sneeze?* 1921. Here in lifting a wire cage filled with cubes of sugar, one is startled by its unexpected weight, for the cubes are marble, not sugar.

The mural *Tu m'* is rich in inventive techniques, and combines most of those so far discussed. Further, it contains many new ideas.

Trompe-l'œil is introduced—Duchamp painted a simulated rent in the canvas ‘held together’ with real safety pins. Shadows and the ghosts of shadows appear, forecasting the later *fumage* of Paalen, Matta and others. These shadows are thrown by the hat rack, bicycle wheel and a corkscrew. Set in the centre of the canvas is a pointing hand, the sign painter’s *cliché*, for the execution of which Duchamp brought in a local artisan; and, projecting at right angles from the canvas, is a ready-made object consisting of a bristle brush.

As fascinating as are the many techniques and philosophic ideas in themselves, they serve the more important function of being aids to the re-examination of aesthetic concepts, of contemporary culture and its relation to culture in general. That Duchamp’s aesthetic sensibility enabled him to do this on a high spiritual plane adds immeasurably to the stature of his achievement. Perhaps more than any one of his contemporaries he has rediscovered the magic of the object and its esoteric relation to life, for centuries obscured in the Greek concept of sculpture. Contemporary points of view may be found in Duchamp’s work, cubism, futurism, collage, dada and surrealism. This is not eclecticism, but the varied activity of a creative nature too large to be confined in any one movement. So all-encompassing, so pulsating with contemporaneity and so fecund is his work that as various phases of vanguard art unfold and develop, they find in it their counterpart. Picasso’s energy is so intense that he exploits every possibility implicit in his inventions. Klee’s fantasy leaves more space for the investigations of the younger painters. But the treasure trove of subtleties in creative ideas and techniques in Duchamp’s work is still essentially untouched. Tapping these resources will provide a rich yield for the new generation of painters, in whose awareness lies the future of twentieth-century painting; for here, deeply embedded with meaning, is one of the great, little explored veins in contemporary art.

RUDOLPH FRIEDMANN

THE WORLD OF THE FATHER

A MAN, lying in bed with his wife as if he was lying in his coffin, alive because he was not sufficiently sensitive to die, began to clasp his teeth with both hands endeavouring to undo the bolts that held them in his mouth. Slowly the chords of saliva grew longer as the teeth commenced their journey across the bed into the little cup serenely awaiting their arrival. The man was a fervent reader, he was constantly to be seen in bookshops, in fact reading had exhausted him and one by one his own teeth had dropped out of his mouth. He had a feeling that the false teeth were purer than his own, that they represented, in their perfect harmonies, the physical flowering of his mature spirituality. He even believed that if he read *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *Dark Night of the Soul* often enough the pair of teeth playfully floating about and kissing each other in the night cup would produce a child—a minute and spiritual upper plate with which he could bite and grind down into dust his lower nature. In order that a chaste guardian should preside over the gambollings of his teeth while he slept a dreamless sleep—he was far too dead to dream—*Training for the Life of the Spirit*, pamphlets one and two, shone forth out of the lapels of his suit suspended on a hanger above his bed. He changed his literary buttonholes every Monday morning after reading the Sunday book reviews. There was a long waiting list—*The Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross*, *The Life of Christ by Chinese Artists*, not to mention *Le Crève-Cœur* and *Les Yeux d'Elsa* which he could not understand but which looked very distinguished when worn with a new suit. Below, in the garden of his emotions which did not strain after the refinement of his intellect, the aggressive growling of his savage Alsatian dog which he had systematically starved for days, rose up. Lying in bed the man began to identify himself with the dog; he determined to take the dog to the bookshop tomorrow and his great moment of ecstasy would come when the dog jumped up and bit the bookseller, the man who always seemed to stand above him

and see through him as if he were transparent. When he entered the bookshop next morning he saw the bookseller before him; he felt as if a huge eagle was flying through the shop and that its wings would bruise and crush him. His black lips, seeming to breathe out thin dust as they opened, tried to smile winningly: 'What do you recommend today?' 'Cremation'. He saw the bookseller as if he was coming towards him with a stick, a burning red-hot piece of metal which, pointed at him, slowly drew nearer until he could hear it spitting as it moved through the cold winter air. With an empty grimace he held out his hot hand, steaming with negative Eros, and at the same time he commanded the starving dog, straining at the thin string with which he was held, to bite the bookseller, living symbol of the father on earth the existence of whom the degenerate mystic cannot stand. Such a type is interested in finding the father not on earth but in heaven. The compulsive interest in mysticism seeks to mask the death wish against the father who has been, in the realm of thought, already driven out of this world into the next. The spiritual neurosis of the mystical son is only interested in preserving the memory of the dead, the heavenly, father—the *imago* as God and not as reality. His spirituality depends on the father staying in heaven—blessed be our father which art in heaven—as soon as the father shows the least sign of realizing himself on earth, whether it be in the shape of a bookseller or in any other form, he must be killed. Today mystical destructive youth can only worship the father who has been degraded into appearing as a brother type. The bookseller came nearer and the dog gazed into his eyes and recognized the superior power. Slowly, with pity turning into hatred, the dog turned away and looked at his master and saw that he was not a master but only a stupid weak boy. There was nothing to bite. The man had been castrated by spirituality. However, in his wisdom, the dog decided to bite and destroy the slice of weak humanity that still remained.



People buy books in order to read about sexual intercourse and erotic perversions. This desire, except in the case of schizophrenics who consistently lay bare their inmost self, remains unconscious and transforms itself into a compulsive and unending interest in the literature of mysticism. One can say that one is

dealing with a displacement of the instinct from below to above; libido which originally sought a genital outlet is transferred to the cerebral centres and the resulting thought, in order to more effectively mask the original erotic stimulus, is directed towards books on mysticism and mystical knowledge which appears on the surface as the antithesis of sexuality. On the other hand, a highly ambivalent attitude is shown towards books on psychology, with the emphasis falling on the negative reaction. In general, people hate and dread active psychology in the same degree as they hate and dread sexuality, the resistance to analysis manifesting itself as interest in analysis, that is to say as interest in bourgeois, safe, repressed, mystical psychology. Making the pathetic attempt to forget sexuality, libido is sublimated along mystical channels, thus showing that the instinct and the sublimation, both basing themselves on repression and not on consciousness, are no longer healthy; the interest in mysticism and yoga, which certainly cannot offer any solution for the problems of the epoch and is an attempt to artificially inject culture into civilization, reveals that the heavy cloud of the Eastern death-instinct has entered both the European sexual impulse and its ethical manifestation. This conclusion entirely coincides with our knowledge of type psychology. The intellectual type of today can most often be represented by a tall, slightly stooping figure, with the skin drawn tightly across the cheekbones, the pale sadistic lips desiring to cut to pieces even as they utter, the eyes attempting to reproduce the severe and compelling gaze of the father and yet at the same time strangely powerless and watering with the pathos of the son slowly moving out of life; this is the typical English schizoid and this same type, on entering a bookshop, demands endless copies of *The Ten Principal Upanishads* and *The Aphorisms of Yoga*. These titles may be said to sum up the aspirations of a whole generation of schizoid intellectuals; in particular *The Cloud of Unknowing* seems to offer in itself a complete solution to the libidinous desires of its readers. The fact that sublimation can take place so easily and with such an absence of conflict, that there is no desire of the ethically manifested libido to return to its instinctive source, reveals that one is dealing with a fundamental motoric poverty of feeling. The personality no longer finds its deepest regression and poetry in the gardens of sexuality, it has withered away into a boring metaphysical existence, one should not even

speak of sublimation in connection with the whole prevailing static cloud of inner deadness. The union, the harmonious blood-flow between instinct and thought no longer exists; in consequence the more books such people buy the smaller their personalities seem to become. An interest in mystical literature has thus become the national sublimation of the typical schizoid type with leanings towards schizophrenia. In so far as schizophrenia is the disease of the disappearance of the unconscious as dynamic fountain of inspiration it is the task of the bookseller to lead this type, if this is still possible, away from mysticism, from unkowning, back to psychology, to conflict, to the recreation of the unconscious in which the tension between sexuality and sublimation does not find too easy a solution. The separation of sexuality from sublimation leads not, as one might expect, to the consolidation of the ethical personality, but to its withering away into a desert of lifeless mystical emptiness. What is required is, of course, both instinct and repression—in England it is always a case of 'either-or'—a dialectical fusion in order to create the total personality seems to be beyond the scope of the English schizoid. There is required both warmth and distance leading to the easy flowing psyche in which the difficult unconscious has ripened and passed over into consciousness. A bookshop has, of course, no shortage of neurotics, especially aggressive ones, amongst its visitors. Reading represents their favourite form of psychological release, and in many cases they are led hopelessly away from reality through books, studying only those works which feed their neurosis and their sadistic infantilism. In the nineteenth century neurosis was creative; in the twentieth century it is completely uncreative. This is not a moral statement based upon envy of the potent will-to-illness but flows from the fact that psychoanalytical knowledge has become a reality to the unconscious, has begun to break it up. The unconscious, at its present level of development, has fulfilled its historic mission and in consequence those neurotic conflicts which are a product of that unconscious are themselves uncreative, recapitulating stages already passed, and reflecting in their imaginative poverty the burial of the libido in the grave of contemporary personality. Neurosis today lacks depth, lacks power, lacks originality; to be precise the neurotic simulates neurosis. Surrealism represented the last ideological flowering of neurosis before the end. Again the bookseller of the

future must seek through his choice of books to prepare the conditions for the coming together of the conscious and the unconscious based on a new wave of libido which will join together imagination and reality. Observing people in a bookshop one is struck by their curious behaviour in relation to the books to which they are clearly ambivalent. The books excite them, they seem to pick them up and caress them with love and then suddenly the book is dropped, almost thrown onto the floor as the unconscious of an over-anxious mother seems, accidentally, to drop the baby born of a loveless marriage. Likewise the unconscious, and in some cases the conscious, sees that the jackets of the books are torn and that the pages of new books become stained and yellow like withered autumn leaves; heavy suitcases are placed roughly on top of the delicate pastel shades of the covers as if it was desired to crush and obliterate them beneath heavy stones. Sexually repressed fingers shiver with tension as, with too impetuous a love, they flick over the pages of a book and tear them. People tear at the virginity of a book and before its inner sacredness they have no respect. Instead of being treated with reverence, as an object of eternal spirituality, the book is treated at times almost with hate. Until now the meaning of this ambivalent attitude has not been understood. People manifest both hatred and love for books because the book symbolizes the world of the existing spiritual father and the world of the woman as eternal giver of life. The book brings forward the world of the spiritually creative and potent parents so hated and feared by the impotent generation of our time. Unable to hate their own parents who are far too insignificant, the hatred is projected onto an impersonal object such as the book because it contains within itself the inner wisdom and power which youth can no longer realize in reality. The interest in mysticism is now understood as a partial solution of the conflict on the part of the schizoid neurotic (no real pyknic type is ever sincerely interested in mysticism). If the book, at its highest peak of intellectual development, represents the world of the father, the interest in the mystical book shows a great respect for the father but at the same time consigns him to heaven and grants him this veneration only so far as his power is limited to the regions of death. The mystic worships the dead father; the very essence of the mystical book is that its power shall never be realized on earth, that its elusive



enchantment shall float away beyond man and the world. It is no accident that Jung, in his struggle against the superior father-imago Freud, became the advocate of mysticism in psychology. In the form of mystical literature the son type recognizes the supremacy of the father but watches that his sway shall not extend to the earth. Mysticism sees that the spirit of the father never enters the world of reality. Reality is reserved for the neurotic fantasies of impotent sons. Training for the life of the spirit turns out to mean training to keep the father's spirit dead and buried in heaven. The interest in mystical literature is thus one of the most reactionary symptoms in modern life. The interest in books on psychology is more healthy in so far as it attempts to realize the power of the wise father on earth through the instrument of the living personality gradually embracing the understanding depth of the imago and transforming the son into a creative and harmonious man. However, all those whose psyche fears the return of the father will treat books on psychology with disdain and even hatred, while reserving the little affection they possess for books on mysticism. Here the role of the bookseller as analyst commences. He should point out the reason for the ambivalent attitude shown in the treatment of books. The desire to tear a book cover reveals on the part of the woman a wish to annul the prevailing sexual conditions of her life, and on the part of the man a wish to tear his father to pieces. The desire for books on mysticism is a compromise solution revealing veneration for the dead, and not the living, father. The bookseller should show that only by becoming conscious of one's unconscious can humanity grow out of intellectual childhood and bring the power of the father to birth once again in the world. The function of the bookseller is, through his choice of books, to create the ideological link between the father and the son so that, through the figure of the son, the will of the father is realized in earth as in heaven. The first burden of analytical consciousness is the recognition that one must trust in the integrity of one's own inner position and learn to do without books which can become a hypnotic drug, like analysis itself, masking the real problem. The present demand for books, springing out of the first infantile unconscious, is an expression not of strength but of the greatest possible inward degeneration and emptiness. Amongst our contemporaries the wish to read does not represent a desire to escape from the

difficulties of life (to a democrat life can never be difficult; the more orphans he can meet and give love to the more sweetly democratic is life) rather is the book an escape from the complete absence of thought prevailing amongst all sections of society and in this respect the mania to read is an unhealthy symptom. Today the bookseller sees before him a ravenous horde. The more books he hurls into their mouths the more quickly they swallow them. One must admit that it is impossible to fill this inner void which brings up in an acute form the whole catastrophe of English intellectual life and its dependence on external stimulation. It is useless to read books on the unconscious when one has no living unconscious left with which to interpret life. When one looks at the behaviour of those who borrow books one is struck by the fact that desire born of unconscious emptiness is always an injurious and malevolently grasping desire. The borrowed book is no longer returned to its owner because the book, representing a projection of the human personality into life, is a symbol of the lender's love for one. In a love-starved epoch love and the book are never returned. Those who borrow books are all unconscious thieves of love; thus the book is either kept or lost (aggression against the lender). One result of this little analysis is to show the reality of the transference which operates in all human contacts and the importance of recognizing in time its positive and negative rhythms if enmity is to be avoided. People suffer from an emotional but empty excitement in choosing books; they need the discipline of an inwardly kind and understanding authority presented to them in an outwardly strict and emotionally cool form. It is the task of the bookseller's personality to represent this inward and outward role, to give to the public the wise guidance of the living spiritual father who surveys literature from the distance necessary to the forming of a detached yet enthusiastic viewpoint. Only through the appearance in reality of the father type, possessing the quietness and dignity of conscious assurance and the sensitive, naive, and delicate libido of the feminine Eros, can the inner cultural gaiety of analytical consciousness be given to civilization which cannot ripen until it has integrated within itself the analytical outlook. The bookseller can counsel that a book ought not to be bought out of the first desire which should always be resisted. Then one should wait, and if the second desire rises up out of the total personality, then the book can

be bought out of inner ripeness. The bookseller must understand that the book chosen should accord with the development of the personality. It is useless for the primitive type to seek to jump beyond himself into the depth of European literature for which he is not yet ready. Precisely the absence of inborn enthusiasm (how few hearts really miss a beat over the book) and the constant striving after culture transforms culture into non-culture. The bookseller must prepare the way so that one can step without too abrupt and harmful a transition from one intellectual plane to another.

During this process he will maintain a close relationship with his public and yet never allow the transference to get out of his control. The bookseller becomes the father and takes on his shoulders the full weight of the positive and negative transference manifested towards him, and then he teaches that one must not fall in love with him but with the guiding world of ideas which he represents and puts forward in his choice of books. The true loneliness and inner aristocracy of spirit will not arise out of the compulsive and infantile desire to read and to use the book as an external crutch upon which the weak man and the timid attempt at sublimation can lean, but can only grow out of the independent decision to exist alone and to re-create the unconscious in the natural earth of personality. The ultimate aim is to be so full of libido and to be so clear and deep within oneself that one can go easily beyond books; and then be free to return to literature, not out of compulsion and neurosis, but with the second experience of life and sublimation.



The bookshop of the future must be planned from without as well as from within. A modern building, designed by an architect such as Walter Gropius, is required in the centre of the West End which would contain a place for all the arts—a bookshop, a picture gallery, a concert hall for music, a theatre for drama and ballet and a cinema—all under the direction of a practical and dynamic personality with a feeling for the musical synthesis of the arts. The interior should be by Marcel Breuer with his wonderfully pure and lyrical feeling for modern décor. Just in the world of books, with their organic delicacy, a sensitive, almost feminine touch is required. More aesthetic and adjustable forms

of shelving and tables with gay blue bakelite tops should be used. In a bookshop the dialectical display of the books (the establishment of a viewpoint by external means) is all important. In between the books there should be placed a Chinese bowl, symbol of purity, and a vase of red roses, an expression in nature of the Eros which the books seek to bring forward in a sublimated form. However, the books themselves must speak. This is achieved by visual montage in which the title of each book is conceived as a montage cell possessing an existence of its own. Out of the dynamic collision of all the titles there is created the particular intellectual pattern and æsthetic unity which should distinguish each bookshop. The formal and lifeless presentation of books, classified under subject headings and arranged in strict alphabetical order, so beloved by booksellers, has been broken down. No longer is it a matter of putting books together like children's bricks to achieve an infantile surface unity. On the contrary, by using each book as a montage shot in a film, the bookseller can control the whole intellectual process and can mould the choice of books according to a mature European literary outlook. The tragedy of the English bookshop has been that either people have forced their primitive tastes upon the bookseller or the bookseller has been at the tail, and not at the head, of the intellectual process. Now by his arrangement of books the bookseller can guide the public's reactions and seek to resolve them at a higher level of development. As in a film, the visual display of a bookshop is built up out of the montage of individual book titles coming together in sharp collision to form a critical anti-idealistic irritant and synthesis. The following four examples may be of interest. Dr. Oscar Levy's *The Idiocy of Idealism* is placed next to Heard's *The Creed of Christ*; Henry Green's *Loving* merges into *Release from Nervous Tension*; Chandler's novel *The Lady in the Lake* is put next to Layard's *The Lady of the Hare* (showing that the American novel is much more dynamic than laborious English introversion); Thomas Mann's *The Coming Victory of Democracy* is placed next to Spengler's *Decline of the West* (the present optimistic Mann is thus reminded of the pessimistic and musical greatness of *The Magic Mountain*). Gradually a new dynamic and individual way of looking at books is awakened in the mind. For the actual window display stills can be used in a sequence of well-chosen shots representing in pictorial form the

theme of the book. This is a very effective and visual method as was shown in the 1941 Hemingway window. A more recent instance was the use of film shots with Cyril Connolly's translation of *Le Silence de la Mer*. The shaved head of Falconetti from Dreyer's *Jeanne d'Arc* represented the spiritual castration and depression of the German officer in the book, and the shot of Veidt, lunging impotently against the dark night of his own death instinct, brought forward the conflict between the two aspects, the day soul and the night soul, of the Faustian personality. Kafka's *The Trial* which is the novel of the unending and just trial of humanity for the original sin of the murder of the primeval father was displayed with a still of the dying Count Dracula pressing his hand to a non-existent heart. In the background the crumbling buildings symbolize the collapse of the son's aggression against life (K., of course, is the European son type par excellence). The shot of the coffin, dragged in and out of widening circles of gloom and disease, contained within itself the tragic greatness of the agonizing and unnatural European death.

It will be self-evident that in a planned bookshop, amidst exact and harmonious surroundings, neurotic behaviour with all its ambivalence towards the books and motoric clumsiness cannot be tolerated. As has been shown the bookseller, by making conscious the problem, can make a special contribution to resolving it. The problem is that of dissolving the negative solution of the Oedipus Complex, which aims at destroying the father and which is the last psychic component of the first traditional unconscious still possessing a certain dying and hence affectively clinging hold on the schizoid personality, and transforming it into the acceptance of the painful and joyful spirit of the profound imago brought forward on the fresh strong wave of libido which, arising out of the union between the unconscious and the conscious, growing together after meeting in reality, will form the second unconscious. The new Existential psyche, the rebirth of feeling in the inner world, will possess on earth the heavenly power of the imago. In the bookshop of the future the coming together of the internal Eros and the external reality will transcend façade decoration and result in the creation of new values.

MICHAEL WARR

WHERE SHALL JOHN GO?

VIII—CHILE

IN a famous passage of a speech in 1872, Disraeli said: ‘As I sat opposite the Treasury Bench the Ministers reminded me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coasts of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest. But the situation is still dangerous. There are occasional earthquakes and ever and anon the dark rumbling of the sea.’ The Pacific certainly rumbles bravely, but it is quite evident that Disraeli was drawing, like Prescott in his account of the conquest of Peru, solely upon his imagination and on books. For if, as one can only assume, he was thinking of the west coast of South America, there is no question of such landscapes. The scene is far less exciting.

Picture a traveller in a liner steaming south in the Pacific from Panama. Emerging from the canal, the ship skirts the coast of Colombia, then Ecuador, then Peru, dogged by a marine landscape composed almost entirely of the pestilential luxuriance of tropical vegetation, and cut occasionally by greasy rivers like the Guyaquil. In Peru all this changes for no apparent reason to desert—rocky, inexpressibly melancholy desert, generally of an unattractive shade of purple, and dominated from time to time by jagged peaks which somehow manage to dull instead of attract the fancy even of a mountaineer. And then, apogee of melancholy and neglect, comes the ruined city of Chan Chan which was flourishing four hundred years ago, but because the Incas cut off the water supply was a few days afterwards inhabited only by vultures and dead men’s bones. Day after day on the voyage, when the shore is visible, there is no vegetation to be seen. In these conditions the ship arrives at Arica, the first Chilean port of call.

Under a brilliant sun and blue sky (inevitably because the weather here is precisely the same every day of the year except once in twenty-five years, when it rains and flowers immediately sprout from the nitrate-soaked desert and the place looks suddenly like the Chelsea Flower Show and then as suddenly goes

back to what it was before) the traveller goes ashore. He finds a jaunty little village pressed close to the precious river and the precarious vegetation provided by it. There is a theatrical bougainvillaea in the square, purple and resplendent, a little fountain, a large hotel with the gimcrack glass-lined corridor, and many mules, some of them with holes bored half way up their nostrils to allow them, on the principle of the super-charger in an aeroplane, to get more air more rapidly into their lungs, when, as often happens, they have to climb to great heights. Immediately past the last house is desert. No road or track goes across it, for such of its surface as is relatively flat is all equally good enough to carry transport. Arica leaves a smiling memory, and the traveller will retain what is likely to be his last impression of it, namely the Chilean flag floating from the mole, for it is possibly the happiest in design of all national flags and particularly attractive when seen against a background of water. After almost another week of southward steaming, mostly past continuous desert, the ship docks at Valparaiso.

Let us assume that our traveller can disregard time and has no plans, and let us say that it is the spring of the year, October (how odd is the connotation of that month with spring; have no poets sung of spring in the southern hemisphere?), when the coast looks at its best. Tumultuous pink geraniums, bougainvillaea, cala lilies and California poppies splash and cascade down the steep rocks round the port. The town of Valparaiso disposes itself as best it may about the precipitous cliffs and bears a curiously hybrid aspect: a Spanish colonial origin overlaid and often completely concealed by segments bearing the unmistakable mark of nineteenth-century Liverpool. For it was Liverpool merchants who made the town (not forgetting themselves) exceedingly prosperous in the days of the expansion of trade when, before the cutting of the Panama Canal, the whole west coast of America could only be visited by ships from the East via the Straits of Magellan or Cape Horn. Valparaiso was then the first port of call and the best harbour on the whole coast. But the wrack that all this has left behind has no very great, even nostalgic, interest and the traveller if he is wise, will concentrate on the strange and incongruous old Spanish quarter with its characteristic architecture in for instance, the Plaza Eguiguren. But little of this has survived and he will not linger long, preferring

to remove himself to Viña del Mar, a few miles to the north. He will find a good hotel called O'Higgins, after the astounding bastard son of a great Irishman in the service of the Spanish Crown who achieved Chilean independence. I would not wish to touch on the history of Chile, but feel compelled to recommend in passing that anyone who thinks of visiting Chile should pay some attention to Bernardo O'Higgins and his association with one of the great military leaders of all time (Professor Temperly has said it) José de San Martín of the Argentine. The traveller will find Viña distinctly conducive to doing nothing at all. He can look at the sea, with its heavy rolling swell, so much slower and more oily, seemingly, than anything found in the Atlantic. But he will not incautiously bathe in it, for it is very cold, due to the phenomenon, more vital in its influence on Chile's geography and climate than any other, the Humboldt current, which, sweeping up cold from the South Pole, performs a task precisely opposite to that of the Gulf Stream for the British Isles. At the appropriate times (very unpunctual) he will eat large meals, including in them the varieties of sea food which make Chile unique in the world. Only in Chile are sea urchins good to eat and there, carefully cooked, they are delicious. Or he will choose strange spongey white creatures called 'locos' which have to be well beaten before they are eaten or they are apt to approximate to the consistency of what they look like, namely albino squash balls. And he will drink Chilean wine which, particularly the white, is decidedly good. In the afternoons he can watch polo or the races and in the evening gamble in the casino.

But perhaps this friendly lotus-eating in the pleasant little town of Viña del Mar will soon pall. The traveller may yearn for activity. It being now the appropriate season, one course open to him, if his taste lies in that direction, is to go south and fish. It behoves him to make careful preparation. If he is wise he will refrain from staying at any of the two or three large noisy, essentially unattractive tourist hotels which have been built at vast and absurd cost during the past few years, and prefer something smaller, assuming that he doesn't intend to camp, which is in many ways the best thing to do. He might choose the Hotel de France, a little inn run by a Czech at a village on the main north-south railway line, called Los Lagos

on the river San Pedro. Here he will find a clean, agreeable hotel and an understanding of fishermen's ways. He will hire a boat and a boatman, arrange that the Czech puts both on a lorry next morning, and then drive off with them upstream. Having gone about five miles the boat will be launched on the broad river (not unlike the Tweed in many ways, including size) and will begin the day's drift down stream. He will prepare his trout rod (one 10 ft. 6 in. in length is perhaps the most suitable), putting about three or four feet of stout gut on the end of it and finally a large salmon fly. The boatman if he is well trained (which is unlikely, but our traveller may be lucky) will follow a loose zig-zag course down stream while all the fisherman does is to trail a fly at the back of the boat, casting, in likely places and when he feels inclined. He will watch assiduously for snags and occasionally dry his fly. When he catches a fish it will either be a rainbow or a brown trout. If it is a good day, he may hook anything up to at least ten pounds in weight and have the greatest fun playing it, and equal fun when it comes to eating it on the bank after the boatman has wrapped it in damp newspaper and cooked it in a fire. From time to time he will get out of the boat at likely looking pools, wade into the warm water and cast. And so the day passes and by the end of it the fisherman will have covered an enormous amount of water. The disadvantage of course is that this rapid progress makes it impossible for him to get to know any pool well. Having such endless miles of uninhabited public river to choose from does not conduce to the proper study of one pool and a knowledge of all its currents and haunts of fish.

But this disadvantage is overcome if our fisherman goes camping, or chooses the compromise solution (possibly the best) of lodging himself in a hut belonging to one of the rare Indian haulers of wood, there to live, providing his own food and bedding. One such place might be on the far shores of Lake Rinihue (the district is rich in curious liquid Indian names) at the mouth of the River Enco, which leads in a few miles to Lake Panguipulli. He will find the mouth of the river an admirable fishing beat. He may even hook a rainbow trout of fourteen pounds, like the one I myself saw caught by an unspeakable German before dawn one day, when we had come out early hoping to steal a march on him. But there are most unlikely to be any Germans or anybody else except the local Indians, and

the worst the traveller has to fear is a bad day, when he will only get an occasional bite from one of those tiny fish, the presence of which to my mind indicates that the bigger fish are totally absent. They are probably indeed at the bottom of the river eating the soft river crabs called 'pancoras', which, pink as they are, perhaps explain why the flesh of Chilean trout is the colour of that of English salmon.

If it is a bad day he can occupy his blank hours looking at the scenery, and he will not be disturbed in doing so, or in his fishing by midges or mosquitoes, for, note well, there are practically none in the south of Chile. The river chooses its course among the number that are open to it along the wide stony bed for which it has become too small. At times indeed it is forcibly confined between high rocks and it is mainly in such places that the fisherman has his best chance. Beyond the stones the banks are of grass with trees upon them which have all too often had the readily combustible part of them burnt, leaving only the stump behind. Such charred ruins are a sad sight in southern Chile and one of the few reminders (for a specially luxuriant vegetation takes pains to conceal the others) of a prevalent scourge: forest fires. A forest fire turns the nearby atmosphere a diseased yellow, the only difference from a London fog being the intense heat which prevails and the floating scraps of black substance like bits of burnt paper from an incinerator. There is always a mist in Chile, blurring outlines, softening colours, and floating its vague veil over the whole landscape. It dulls first the trees, and the receding river and then proceeds to do its greatest work upon the distant mountains, turning them into shapes without texture. But the mist is powerless to dim the dazzling snow on the peaks of the volcanoes, just as not even smoked glasses can prevent the sun from appearing bright. The general landscape is of proliferating vegetation uniformly and thickly covering as with a rug, the low hills through which the valley pushes. This rich picture, which Steer would have painted so well, is startlingly capped by cones of brightness, symmetrical and unaccountable in an other-wish sprawling lush scene. They add a touch of distinction, these equilateral triangles of white. If the whole volcano is seen instead of being concealed, as generally happens, behind other hills, the sight is grander. But one has seen this particular grandeur in the post cards (and the bombers' photographs) of Fuji-Yama,

and one has not seen on any post card a hill, covered with a fur rug dyed green and crowned with a veiled remote volcano top which turns peach-coloured in the setting sun.

And so even on bad days there is something to watch. But it may be that by a very unlikely mischance the fishing has got into such a bad patch that our traveller decides to leave. He will probably, it being now autumn, elect to return to the capital. Santiago is a city of even greater architectural contrasts than Valparaiso. Again upon a foundation essentially Spanish have been superimposed layers, this time of France and Germany and England and latterly a square slab of the United States. An old Spanish church in pink adobe looks wrong among the gimcrack skyscrapers and dingy remnants of a nineteenth-century prosperity which built its houses much as they would have been built at the same time in Paris or London. And then comes modernity from the 'Colossus of the North' and from Germany, though the latter does not indeed venture into the centre of the town but fixes itself obstinately in the suburbs, where there are streets which but for the palms down the middle might be (or rather have been) in Frankfurt am Main. In this characterless and very dirty hotch-potch almost the one place with individuality, is to my mind, the central market, la Vega. There are concentrated all imaginable varieties of fruit and vegetables which the astoundingly fertile soil of Chile can produce. No herbaceous border in England in June can show such colour. Oranges heaped on carts roll off to be trampled in the gutter, and one notices that carrots, although dull to look at singly, are striking by the thousand. But probably our traveller who has arrived in the autumn will have missed the oranges and will have come in for the no less remarkable spectacle of the omnipresence of millions of grapes, some of which may be seen dangling oddly from the mouth of a ruminating donkey. And the flowers, too, in the market are worth attention. There is confusion and jumble in the due order of the seasons in Chile, and the flowers seem consequently disinclined to submit to the discipline of time. For they follow and overlap each other in such breathless haste that it is hard to tell from observing the flowers that appear in the market whether it is spring, summer, autumn, or even winter. Peach blossom for instance can be found next to roses, and in bowls in Santiago houses, chrysanthemum often looks oddly well with narcissus.

But all this will not take long for the traveller to see and Santiago itself will have little else to offer him. Restless again, he will probably think this time of an expedition to the mountains. The Andes opposite Santiago average between 18,000 and 20,000 feet and they dominate the scene so strongly that people have said (not altogether convincingly in my view) that the main street of Santiago, the Alameda, is like the Maria Theresa strasse in Innsbruck. At any rate mountains play a great part in the perspectives of both towns. Five miles east of Santiago along a level road the foothills begin to rise and they go up straight with startling abruptness to 11,000 feet or so. There are no gentle green alps where cows browse, clinking bells, but a continuous, cactus-infested, steep, stony, harsh slope, most fatiguing and laborious to climb. From the mountaineer's technical point of view the Andes are unrewarding because there is a lot of hard toil and few real rock or ice problems, and those which there are require a great deal of organization to reach. Indeed, all climbing in Chile needs organization, for there are practically no huts with provisions and only very rarely with water. To have to carry water in mountains may seem an absurdity to the European mind, but it is very necessary in Chile. But all these inconveniences are well worth overcoming, for there is compensation in plenty: views over the terrifying jagged desolation of the Andes, surely the most solitary and inhospitable range in the world, and then by contrast surprising descents into fertile valleys where there are the expected cows and green grass with, additionally, a profusion of flowers, including orchids and wild lilies, which no Swiss valley ever dreamt of.

Later in the year again the traveller may think of ski-ing. Fortunate indeed is the capital of a country whose citizens can, in two hours by car, be transported to excellent ski slopes. The road is indeed bad, but I have driven over many worse in Europe and once known it has few difficulties, the chief of which is probably to prevent the car boiling. At the top there is a village called Farellones. It has club huts where in tolerable discomfort the traveller may stay. There are also many private huts (some of them, one in particular, deserve a grander name). They are well built, the lay-out is good, and the whole forms a pleasing agglomeration against the snow which smoothly slopes up to the nearby peak, the Colorado. To reach the top it takes an

hour and a half or so, and ten minutes or less to come down. On his way up he will quite probably have the good fortune to see a condor, black, huge and immobile, and he will perhaps think what an admirable description there is of this bird in Leconte de Lisle's poem. But the very adventurous skier may find that the slopes at Farellones are a little restricted. If so, and if he has time, he will take the train from Santiago and, with one change into the dilapidated tiny transandine mountain train, of which even the west of Ireland would be ashamed, so rickety is it, he will find himself five hours later at Portillo. There is a mammoth hotel and a smaller one. Unerringly plumping for the latter he can almost be guaranteed a pleasant stay, the best ski-ing snow anywhere in the Andes, a ski-lift of a kind in case he likes such things, a great variety of ski runs (one of them to the celebrated but overrated Christ of the Andes) and, a most important ingredient, the easy conviviality of Chileans with the entire absence of chafes and bothers seemingly characteristic of a people which is content to accept what comes along.

These attractive human characteristics he will also find everywhere in Chile and if he has been fortunate enough to make Chilean friends during his protracted holiday, which is probable enough, he may spend, before he leaves for home, a day or two on a Chilean farm. A country house in Chile (called a 'fundo') is built for its essential farming purpose and as the centre of the usually large community which works the land round about. It is built in the Spanish style of only one storey, two being dangerous in the case of an earthquake. Courtyard after courtyard ramify from the centre so that from the air the whole must look like the end of a centripetal game of dominoes. All is usually ancient, dilapidated, untidy and not infrequently dirty, but retaining withal a very full measure of charm concocted somewhat similarly to that of houses in the west of Ireland. But here the measure is pressed down and running over. Wistaria dwarfs a full-size tree to which it started life by clinging. Now, sowing down from the seared and knotted branches, the flowers sluice over the low roofs. Hydrangeas, the size of the earth with which Charlie Chaplin sported in that inimitable scene in *The Dictator*, sprout pink and blue from between the surrounding tall trees. Vines and orange trees grow in the inner courtyards through which flow little streams, none the less

delightfully because one sometimes suspects they may be drains. In the front of the entrance there is always a congregation of people placidly talking and always also an abundance of horses which the visitor can ride at any time he feels inclined. He will do well incidentally to insist on what is called an 'English saddle' because if mounted on a Chilean saddle which is composed in the main of multitudes of thick blankets he will, until accustomed to it, feel sharply akin to a chicken wish-bone being pulled. He will see sensible farming and the one per cent of Chilean soil which in present conditions is cultivatable (note this, those who say that Chile is a rich country) and more than average good, the Aconcagua valley being the second most fertile district in the world. Apart from the crops one would expect, he may see rice-fields, virulent green, in which startlingly white egrets, one of the most graceful birds in the world, incongruously perch. In the autumn he will be asked to shoot. If, as sometimes happens, the sport is well organized, he will be sure to enjoy himself. The staple game are 'tortolas' which in California are called morning doves. Like all Chilean birds they are unknown in England. But they are not unlike a pigeon in habits and appearance, only smaller, and are exceedingly fast and difficult to shoot, especially at first, for the visitor will be unfamiliar with their dodges.

Apart from all this there is the company. Here the visitor will discover that whatever else the Chileans are incapable of doing, they are past masters in organizing for themselves a simple and unpretentious life. They are friendly, kind, amusing, unaddicted to fuss or palaver and though disinclined to tedious discussion, are exceedingly quick on the uptake, and accommodating, tactful and delightful in light conversation. They very often speak good English, and in this respect (as well in general as in all others) the Chilean women are greatly superior to the Chilean men. There is always plenty of food, usually good, an abundance of wine and a more than adequate number of servants to fetch it and carry it. He would be a strange visitor indeed who was not charmed with this kind of life, which in itself typifies what may be found in the rest of the country.

When the traveller eventually and almost certainly regretfully leaves, he will probably decide that for the sportsman and for the idler Chile has few equals for a holiday resort.

SELECTED NOTICES

Polemic. Edited by Humphrey Slater. Rodney Phillips. 64 pp. 2s. 6d.

THE first number of this new miscellany promises to fill a conspicuous gap in the contemporary press, for it is a symposium of ideas. We have a sufficiency of literature and a surfeit of journalism, but no vehicle for thinking, especially for that somewhat acrid but bracing thought which has constructive value. Orwell contributes a first-rate analysis of nationalism (which he carefully distinguishes from patriotism), Earl Russell explains logical positivism, A. J. Ayer peels the Deity like an onion. 'As for its [life's] meaning or purpose, it has whatever meaning or purpose one chooses to give it, and that, I should say, is all'. Dr. Glover contributes a fine onslaught on State Psychiatry, 'Effective transmission of human culture is carried out in the family . . . the State compared with either the individual or with the family group is an incredibly backward institution . . . it is a loveless institution living on the love-reputation of the family'. Spender and Joad also contribute, and Henry Miller cuts a caper. The present format is not very satisfactory and could be improved. A most welcome and invigorating production, modestly and discreetly edited.

By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept. By Elizabeth Smart. 54 pp. Poetry London. 6s.

THIS is an interesting prose experiment, in which the authoress makes use of a flowing disjointed cursive prose poetry to narrate an unhappy love-affair. In such triangles it is the wife who generally suffers most, and the Other Woman who writes the book, and to this Miss Smart's Narrator is no exception. She describes a violent and adroit piece of home-wrecking but wins the reader's sympathy, partly because after all it is she who is telling the story, partly because she is no more to be spared from the consequences than either of the others. The action takes place in California, Canada and New York and follows the accepted course of :

' . . . Joyes

Once sweet, now sad to mention through dire change
Befallen us unforeseen'.

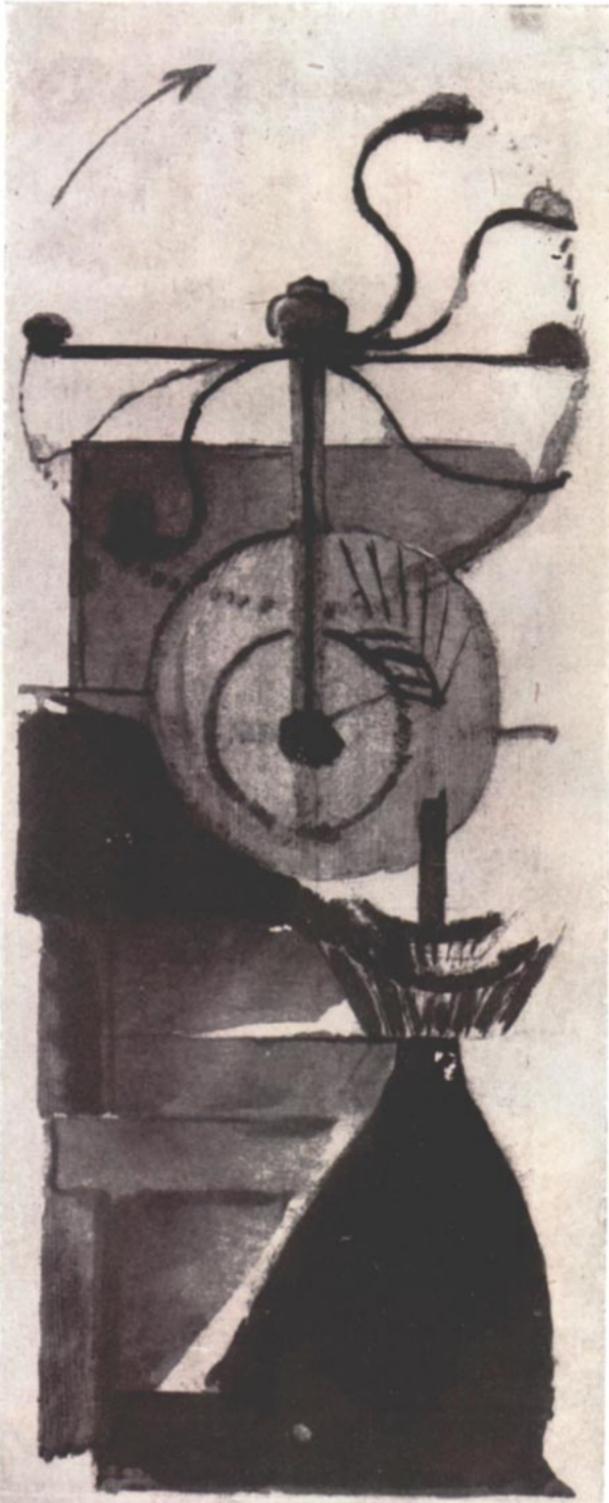
But the telling is fresh and vivid and reveals a genuine gift of poetic imagination, a fine sincerity and a deep candour in suffering which does not degenerate into self-pity. The strength and weakness of the book is in the magnificent humourlessness of this *Venus toute entière* which, though it blinds her to the moral situation and also to all general comic or ironical attitudes to what is not, after all, a very uncommon predicament, also gives to her writing the intensity of a possessed hierarchical figure, a Bacchante, an Io. Miss Smart's fault is to lapse too often into bathos and to attempt flights of rhetoric which weaken the emotive effect on the reader. Another six months' work on it, and oh, the difference! But with the hit-or-miss night-minded school of writers to which Miss Smart appears to belong, there never is another six months—nor even a wintry critical friend to remove the occasional pretentious falsities and facetiousness. Nevertheless this first book is full of promise and belongs to our time.

C.C.

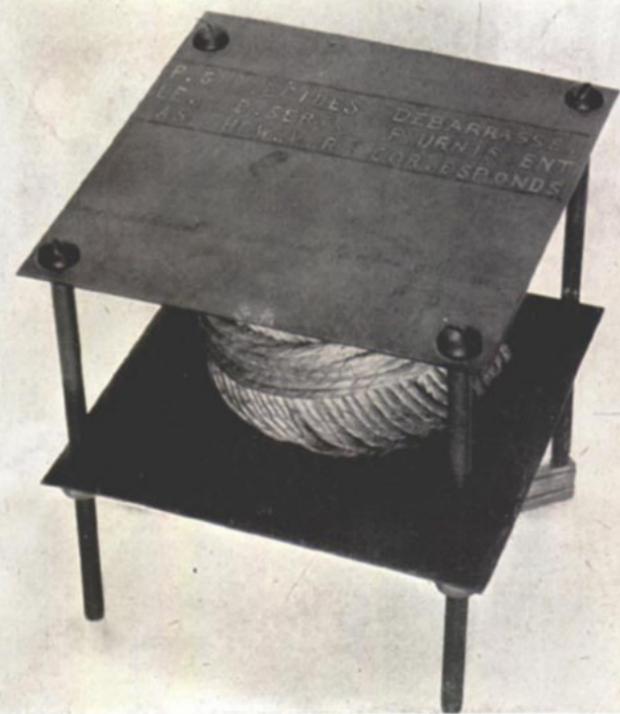


MARCEL DUCHAMP. The King and Queen traversed by swift nudes. 1912.

Collection, Walter C. Arensberg



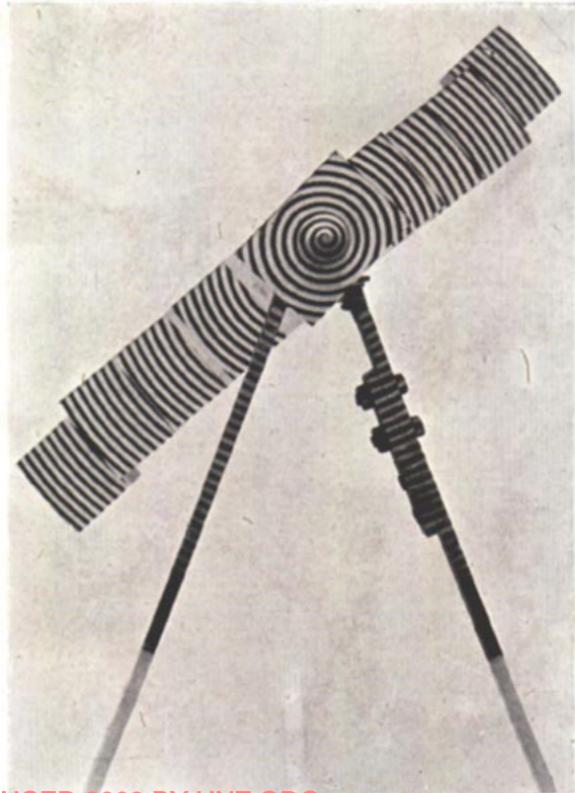
Coffee grinder. 1911
Collection, Lignières



A bruit secret. 1916

Collection,

Walter G. Arensberg



Rotary glass plaques. 1920

Collection, Miss Katherine S. Dreier



Boîte. 1941-42

Collection, Sidney Janis



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